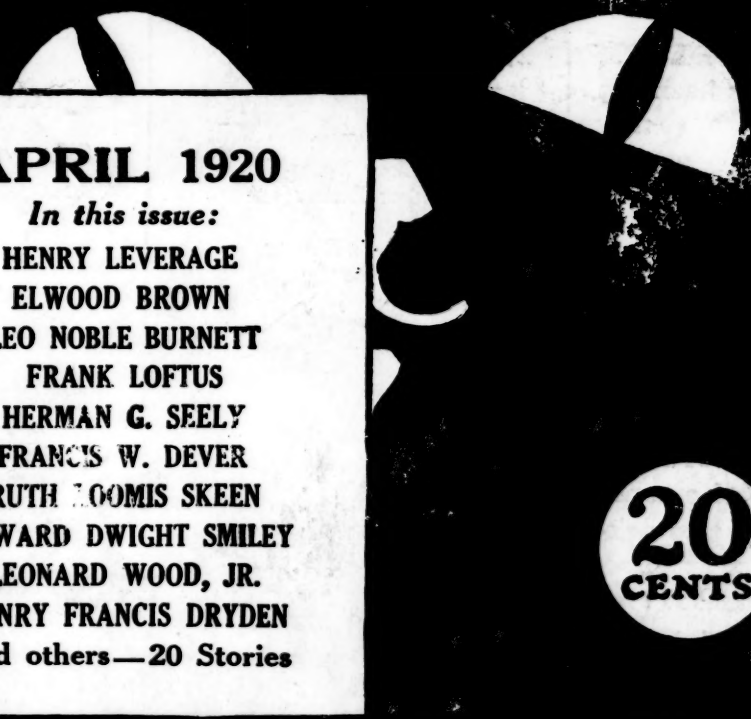
In This Issue: Two Prize Contests—$7500.00 In All

The Black Cat

ESTABLISHED 1895



APRIL 1920

In this issue:

HENRY LEVERAGE
ELWOOD BROWN
LEO NOBLE BURNETT
FRANK LOFTUS
HERMAN G. SEELY
FRANCIS W. DEVER
RUTH LOOMIS SKEEN
HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY
LEONARD WOOD, JR.
HENRY FRANCIS DRYDEN
and others—20 Stories

20 CENTS

THE BLACK CAT MAGAZINE, INC., *Publi*
229 WEST 28TH STREET, NEW YORK,

$7,500.00

IN CASH PRIZES

for the Best Novelettes and Short Stories

Many writers whose stories are most in demand by magazine editors to-day started their careers by writing stories for the BLACK CAT and taking part in the old prize story contests that made the BLACK CAT famous. For a quarter of a century the BLACK CAT has been the "open door" to new writers; for a quarter of a century it has devoted itself exclusively to the advancement of short-story writing.

Among those who have had their first stories published in the BLACK CAT, or have been competitors in previous contests, are :

Jack London
Rupert Hughes
Alice Hegan Rice
Harry Stilwell Edwards
Will N. Harben
Geraldine Bonner
Sewell Ford
Holman Day
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Juliet Wilbor Tompkins
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In this issue the publishers announce the conditions of two prize story contests, both now open.

The $2,500 Novelette Contest is something new for the BLACK CAT, as the magazine has never published novelettes. The announcement of this contest (see page 2) marks a change of policy and is another forward step in the magazine's career.

For the conditions of the $5,000 Short Story Contest see pages 125-128. Writers should read the conditions carefully before submitting stories.

The two contests are entirely separate, but the conditions are the same with two exceptions.

The publishers wish particularly to call attention to Article 6 of the Conditions, which provides for payment at regular rates, in addition to the prize awards, for all stories submitted in the contest and found to be acceptable for publication.

The Black Cat

Established 1895

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Isaac Goldmann Company, Printers, New York

$2,500.00
IN CASH PRIZES
for the Best Plot-and-Action NOVELETTES

THE PRIZES ARE:

1st Prize	**$1000**	**3rd Prize**	**$500**
2nd "	**750**	**4th "**	**250**

CONDITIONS:

The conditions of this contest are the same as those governing the short-story contest (see pages 125-128) with two exceptions: (1) novelettes may range in length from 10,000 to 25,000 words; (2) the competition will close August 31st, 1920.

Manuscripts should be addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th Street, New York, N. Y.," and envelopes or wrappers should be plainly marked "Prize Contest." Stories fulfilling the conditions of the contest and found to be acceptable for publication in the BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates on acceptance. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and within sixty days of the closing date of the contest awards will be announced in the BLACK CAT and paid in cash.

The publishers cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity for stories of plot and action. The prize winners will be the plot builders; they will be the writers who succeed in packing into 25,000 words or less dramatic and conflicting incidents and actions occurring in the shortest possible time in the lives of the fewest possible characters—the whole developed to a powerful climax and a reasonable and satisfying conclusion.

Write of present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic.

SEA BEEF

By HENRY LEVERAGE

HE Blubber Room on East Street, San Francisco, is an eating and drinking place for masters, mates and pilots.

A dingy painting of a spouting whale, done by a ship's painter, looms over the long bar of the Blubber Room like a far promise to the whaling men who frequent the place.

The bartender and the ancient waiters have been down to sea in ships. Their service stride is the rolling gait of men who have trod the planks of limejuicers and windjammers. Their argot is taken from fo'castle slang of olden days.

Toward this saloon and restaurant, at the close of an early spring day, a man walked who seemed to have business—pressing and immediate. He was known from Unalaska to Sandy Point as Captain Gully. He was put down in the minds of men as an enterprising skipper who had missed fortune by his own gluttony and stubbornness.

Captain Gully, who commanded the Northern Lights—a bark-rigged steam whaler—bore all the outer features of a walrus or a sea horse. His mustache might have been two yellow tusks. His hands were webbed like flippers. His flat feet were splay and fluke-shaped.

He descended the five steps leading to the Blubber Room by turning backwards and gripping a broken handrail. He entered the door and waddled over the floor to a table set by the bar.

Before he had fully consumed a double measure of spareribs and cabbage, washed down by tankards of steam beer, three men entered the Blubber Room, glanced about hungrily, then took chairs at his table.

These three were the mate, chief engineer and second mate of the Northern Lights.

The mate was known as Red Landyard—a Yankee from New Bedford. The engineer went under the pseudonym of Mike Monkey. He was Scotch-Irish. The second officer and ice pilot answered to Mr. Hardcastle. He was a Cockney with a peg leg.

"And blyme!" said he tapping his leg on the floor for a waiter. "Blyme eyes! That beer looks good!"

"A've no doot the skipper will buy us some," suggested Mike Monkey. "A'll take a large mug with some spareribs, some potatoes, some corn and a wee bit ov blackberry pie."

Captain Gully leaned over the table, dragged at his ivory-colored mustache points and said:

"You'll pay for it! I had mine!"

"Change the order," said Mike as he grabbed the arm of the waiter. "A'm not hungry. A'll take pork and beans with some bread and butter."

"Extra for the butter, sir."

"Wot?"

"Ten cents extra."

"A pay no port tax on grease. All A want is the pork and beans and a slice of bread."

Red Landyard gave his order and then said:

"There's a captain called Hoover running the land stores. It's a good thing we're going out. No doubt the ship is well provisioned."

Captain Gully finished swabbing up his plate with a crust of bread. He

leaned back and stared from face to face until his glance returned to Mike Monkey.

"I'm figurin' on livin' off the sea," he said craftily. "I have some stores on the Northern Lights—salt and sugar and coffee and mustard. We'll make out all right with what we catch."

Mike Monkey fluttered a lashless pair of eyelids at this announcement. He gulped upon a stone in the beans. He spat it to the floor.

"Wot? Ye're going out without adequate stores? We'll starve, mon!"

The skipper of the whaler rubbed his flipper-like hands over the bulge of his stomach. "I'm somewhat of a good feeder," he said. "I'll not starve—be sure of that! Why, there's any amount of food in the ocean. I've seen more cod fish off the Aleutians than off the Grand Banks. I've lived on walrus and hair-seal in the Bering. The Arctic is teaming with polar bears and musk oxen and killer whales. The Mackenzie River is alive with salmon. Starve, no!"

"A resign!" declared Mike Monkey.

Captain Gully lifted a hand and signalled the waiter for service. He ordered four steam beers and four stogies which resembled rope-yarn. Mike Monkey chewed on the end of his stogie.

"When d'ye steam?" he asked.

"The tide turns at the crack of dawn. Be ready then. I'll expect one hundred and seventy pounds on the boiler."

"Ye'll be fortunate if ye get seventy," said Mike, rising. "We're in for a hard passage, with that Japanese coal ye sent aboard and no food and a scum of crew wot would disgrace a Red Sea tramp. A've no doot, ye're called unlucky. Ye'll never have luck! D'ye expect to catch right whales with slag and clinkers an' murder in men's hearts?"

"I expect every man on my ship to obey orders," said Captain Gully.

"A resign when it comes to starvation!" Mike Monkey declared as he stared at the faces of his mates. "Ye were never a fortunate mon, from reports. D'ye think ye can live off the ocean?"

Captain Gully patted his ample stomach. "I think so," he said. "I think that it is carrying coals to Newcastle when a ship takes stores to sea. A ship, on such a voyage as whaling, should bring stores to port. There's more meat and beef in the sea than we ever dreamed of!"

"Beef?" asked the first engineer moving toward the doorway.

"Sea Beef!"

Mike Monkey turned and stared sharply at the rotund and greasy form of the skipper of the Northern Lights.

"A'll chance it," he said. "The high cost ov livin' is a serious situation. A'd like to see a place where beef is plentiful."

Captain Gully took command of the party as they reached the cobbles of East Street. He steered a diagonal course to where a dingy dock was flanked by the spars and loose rigging of the whaler Northern Lights.

"You're my guests," said the skipper pointing toward a gangplank. "You'll never forget the voyage."

"That's a doubtful statement," Mike whispered to the Cockney second mate. "A've no doot we'll regret the invitation."

" 'E eats a lot," said the seaman. "Hif 'e can exist—we can!"

Mike Monkey sprang down from the gangplank and glided over the deck to the engine-room companion. He saw the three of the after-guard disappear into the cabin. They were not strangers to the Arctic and the Bering. Mike Monkey had never been beyond the Aleutians.

The Northern Lights was taken in charge of a pilot at daylight. She cleared the Bay with her ancient triple-expansion engine wheezing and clanking to the tune of fifty revolutions per minute.

She dipped at the white water off the Gate. She wallowed on past the Seal Rocks and set a course to weather the Farallones. The pilot was dropped. The patched canvas was set. The half-drunken and fully-disreputable crew were divided into a port and starboard watch.

Nightfall, on a speckless ocean, found the whaler logging seven knots. The whaleboats and the whaling gear had been overhauled. The crow's nest was set at the heel of the topmast. The look-outs were instructed to watch for spouts, although the only whales in that part of the Pacific were killers or devil fish.

Captain Gully believed in overlooking no chances. Once in the memory of West Coast whaling, a bowhead had been harpooned off Oregon. It might happen again.

He had given the order to turn out the side lights, to save oil, when Mike Monkey emerged from the engine-room companion and glared up at the three figures of the after-guard who were standing just over the break of the poop.

Captain Gully, being the central one, came in for Mike's final dart of wrath.

"Ye—a standin' there!" rasped the engineer. "D'ye think we can eat clinkers and slag down here below? Wot manner ov ship is this? A had m' doots about signin' them articles. A had nothing to eat this day save the rind ov a cheese. D'ye think we can keep steam up on a double-door Scotch boiler with that?"

Captain Gully laid his flipper-like hands on the rail and peered over at Mike Monkey.

"You should have dropped lines overside," he suggested. "There's cod and herring, and mackerel and skillies, and flatties and—"

"Wot?"

"There's plenty of fish in this sea," said the skipper waving a hand out over the waters. "Sinbad, the cook, caught enough for the cabin mess and the steerage. We should husband our resources."

Mike leaped upward from the blubber-stained planks of the whaler.

"Husband!" he shouted for all the North Pacific to hear. "A'll husband nothing! A'll swim ashore!"

The skipper turned to his mate and then to the ice pilot.

"Mr. Hardcastle," he said, "you are my witness that he came aboard with his eyes open. I told him we would exist upon what we found in the sea. I sent cod-roe down to the engine room and stoke hold crews. Cod-roe is very nourishing. It's a brain food!"

Mike gulped his Adam's apple, worked it up the full length of his scrawny throat, then wiped his sooty hands on his dungarees.

"Come down!" he challenged. "Come down on the deck, ye miserable lump of a blubber hunter! Ye deceiver ov men! Ye blackbirder! Ye—"

Mr. Gully waddled over the quarter-deck, lifted a brass belaying pin from the weather rail, balanced it in his hand, then started down the poop steps.

Mike backed to a ventilator. He crouched there with both his skinny arms advanced in the position of a music-hall boxer.

"Blackbirder!" grunted Captain Gully. "I'll teach you what blackbirdin' means! I'll make this a slave ship for you! Get down to your engines and stay there. I don't care if you got seven certificates and a war record. I'm cappin of the Northern Lights!"

"A wouldn't brag about it," said Mike Monkey dodging the menace of a blow and gliding for the engine room companion. "This, a slave ship—wot? It'll be ye who sweat and slave—before the passage is over!"

Captain Gully waited until Mike's greasy cap had disappeared below the combing of the deck hatch. Then he turned and glared forward toward the fo'castle and the few members of the crew who had sided with the engineer.

Their attitude of sympathy vanished like a storm cloud. They went about their duties of looking out and cleaning up some of the litter of the deck.

Breathing deeply, Captain Gully mounted to the poop and replaced the belaying pin. He leaned over the rail like a seal from a tank. His jelly-like stomach and the thick flesh around the back of his neck, quivered in the soft glow from the single funnel amidships.

Long he remained in the one position. He was an unlucky skipper. There was that to the opening bars of the mutiny of the first engineer which brought to mind other days and unsuccessful voyages. He had lost more bowhead whales after fastening to them than any man in the Arctic and Bering whaling service. He recalled a few lurid instances. He had set out in early manhood to gain a fortune from the sea. One voyage might bring this fortune. Whalebone was worth five dollars a pound. Few ships had gone north over the days of the war. Now that the war was over, the baleen or bone would be in great demand.

He stared at the sea across the stumpy jib boom of the whaler. It was too early on the voyage to expect the sight of a spout. It was not too soon to secure fish and stores from out of the deep. He turned toward the Cockney second mate.

"Have the watch on deck lower cod-lines overside," he ordered. "We'll keep fishing day and night for stores. I'm going below. You left some of that cod-fish caviar?"

"I did that," said the mate. "'Elp yourself!"

Captain Gully rubbed his stomach and hastened to the cabin-companion. He vanished down this opening like a walrus going through a hole in the ice.

The Cockney spat to the deck, then squinted at the binnacle compass. He turned and glanced at the tell-tale on the top of the wheelhouse.

"Let 'er up a point," he said to the wheelman. "Hi you, forrard, get out lines and troll for cod or blackfish. You'll find bait in the 'arness cask."

The ancient whaler, under sail and easy steam, cut through the night, without sidelights or benefit of illumination. She was on the long leg of her course to Dutch Pass and Unalaska. It was a vast ocean across which few ships navigated.

One such, however, crossed her bow as the cold waters of the Bering met the warm Pacific currents and formed smoky seas. She was an Empress type liner on the Great Circle route from Vancouver to Yokohama. She went by in a swelter and smother of white foam. Her rails were lined with gold-braided officers and Oriental passengers.

They stared down on the fleeting glimpse of a fishing scene wherein the crew and boatsteerers and harpooners of the Northern Lights were getting aboard their stores from out of the sea. Cod was thick on the oily planks. Cod hung from the decrepit standing rigging and funnel stays. Salt-casks of the fish were being lowered into the fore-hold.

Captain Gully was living up to his promise. He had drawn from the vast storehouse of nature. In one thing only had he erred. The human element, from Mike Monkey to the cook, had been left out of his calculations. The entire ship's company were on the verge of mutiny.

They had signed on for a certain percentage of the whale catch. There were no provisions in the articles concerning deep-sea fishing for lesser fry.

Mike Monkey had learned all there was to know about his chances, that voyage. They were so slim that he considered them beneath notice. A fiftieth lay, or the value of the whale catch divided by fifty, was to be his share of the proceeds. The crew drew a two-hundredth lay. That is, each seaman divided the value of the whalebone by two hundred, and pocketed the quotient.

The engineer had drawn some tobacco from the slop-chest. He found by care-

ful calculation with a badly-bitten pencil, that he was going to owe the ship money at the end of the voyage, unless at least one whale was caught.

"An iron dollar!" explained a stoker. "You get an iron dollar with the rest of us."

"Wot's that?" asked Mike.

"It's legal payment made by the owners to sign you off in port."

Mike leaped to the rusty ladder which ran upward to the engine-room companion. He popped upon the deck and glared about the ship. He hitched his dungaree trousers and started aft.

"Ye miserable lump of blubber!" he called. "Ye slaver ov men's souls. A thought we were going whalin'!"

Captain Gully eyed the bristling form of the first engineer. He waved a flipper-like hand over the ship.

"As soon as we are provisioned," he said with an oily smile. "We can't get through the ice beyond the Aleutians now. Why not lay here and store up? You can drop a line overside and fish."

"Fish?" rasped Mike. "A've seen all the fish A want to! A've had fish for three meals for over a fortnight! A've had it fried, boiled and creamed with mustard sauce!"

"Have you tried it planked?" asked Captain Gully.

Mike stared at the ship's deck. He heard an echo of a laugh from forward.

The crew were enjoying his discomfort. They were standing knee-deep in silver-scaled fish. Their lines were over the rail.

"A'll report this to the British Government!" was all Mike would say.

Captain Gully stroked his tusk-like mustache-points. "I'm the government now," he said. "You should have examined the articles when you signed them."

Mike went below and sat down in his cabin. His brain worked over the problem for all of a day and a night. Now and then a mess boy appeared at the door of the cabin with a tray of fish. The first engineer threatened to brain him with a spanner or an eighteen-inch Stillson.

It was at Unalaska that Mike went ashore for a change of diet. He found no restaurant or any eating place. There was a revenue cutter within the bay close by the sandy split. An American ensign offered to take him out in a Whitehall boat and introduce him to the naval crew.

Mike sat down and consumed prodigious quantities of potatoes, bacon, beans and fresh bread. Between bites of his yellow teeth, he explained to a grinning engine-room force the true situation on the whaler Northern Lights.

"Gully," said a water-tender, "has been up here ten seasons. He hasn't caught more than three or four bowheads in that time. He's hard luck! You better desert!"

"A'll take my revenge instead ov deserting," declared Mike as he rose from the mess table. "A feel better now. Is there no way to get that mon?"

"Buy your own mess stuff here at the store and take it out," suggested the water-tender.

"A'll starve first!" said Mike. "A'll watch and wait. A feel better, anyway."

Mike climbed to the spotless deck and went ashore with the ensign. He returned to the Northern Lights that night. The dingy whaler was on the point of hoisting anchor. The second engineer had steam at the wheezy winch.

"Did you hear the news?" he asked as Mike squinted toward the low quarter-deck of the ship.

"Wot news?" inquired Mike turning like a tin spindle. "Did the skipper bring aboard some civilized stores?"

"He did not. He's got word that there's a 'stinker' whale floating about in the Bering what's full of ambergris."

"A stinker?"

"A dead bowhead?"

"A'll watch for that," was all Mike said.

The ship cleared the sandy point and started clamping through Dutch Strait. It passed the rock of the Bishop and entered the Bering sea in a flurry of snow. Two days later, under every pound of steam Mike could build in the single, double-door Scotch boiler, they reached the first of the Great North Pack, which was slowly breaking up and drifting to the Arctic.

Back and forth Captain Gully cruised in search of the ambergris. He ran down every possible clew. He followed the sea birds and the lines of whale food. He navigated through patches of oil. He wore his heart out scanning the smoky waters. Finally the reluctant order was given to head for the first open lane and make for Bering Strait.

Mike drew the fires in his boiler and allowed the steam to die. Strict economy was necessary in order to save the coal. The whaler drifted on under the light pressure from her ancient canvas. The food served in fo'castle, galley, engine room and after cabin was mostly salted codfish and seal's blubber.

"We'd ov had plenty if he hadn't stopped to fish."

The Cockney mate reached into his pocket, brought forth a cord-wrapped pipe and tapped it against his leg.

"There's the Bering Strait," he said pointing the pipe's stem toward the bow of the whaler. "Perhaps our luck will change when we reach the Arctic."

Mike shivered and went down to the engine room. There came a call from the quarter-deck for steam on the engine. He opened the valve and left it wide. The two-bladed propeller slowly thrust the whaler through the last of the ice and into the open water beyond the Diomede Islands.

Shutting off steam and banking his fires, Mike went to the deck. He spent the next few watches, and then the days, searching for some sign of spout or blow. The skipper had offered ten dollars in gold to the first man who would raise a whale. He doubled his offer as the weeks went by. The ship put in at Point Barrow. It turned its decrepit jib boom toward the Mackenzie River and Herschel Island. It was driven back by the coming ice of winter. It was forced to scud with all canvas for the lee of the American Continent. There, near the onshore whaling station of Point Barrow, a polar bear was shot by the American mate, who assisted in skinning it and bringing it aboard.

Mike sniffed at the carcass like a hungry dog. He eyed the sad face of the skipper, who was leaning over the quarter-deck rail. He remembered what Hardcastle, the second mate, had said.

"Ye are improving!" he rasped. "If we stay here long enough we'll shoot another!"

Capatin Gully's answer was direct enough.

"We can eat this, anyway," he said. "Eating is half of life."

"A rather not live!" said Mike Monkey, turning and staring at the bear.

The high cost of living explained Captain Gully's efforts to feed the crew and engine-room force with sea food, but Mike had drawn a line of demarcation between fish and the rancid flesh of hair seals.

"We're goint hup!" he heard the second mate explain. "First we 'ad 'errings, and then we 'ad cod, and now we 'ave game."

"Game?" asked Mike Monkey as they leaned over the rail in the waist.

"Them seals are not considered fish."

"They're worse! Wot with the stinkin' Japanese coal and the Mexican oil and the hides in the main hold, and the seal steaks wot are tougher than belt-lacing, A resign!"

The second mate moved toward the little engineer.

"We'll be eatin' polar bear next." he said. "They're fine!"

Mike exploded with a noise like a safety valve letting off steam.

"The likes ov this voyage was never

known. Here we've steamed and sailed and hunted the Bering Sea. For wot? For fish and game and salty stores wot no mon wants to eat. Why don't he whale? A'll go back to San Francisco and get an iron dollar. A'll owe the skipper money! A don't mind that, if A can owe *him* enough. He's cagey with his slop-chest stuff. A could only get three plugs of tobacco this week."

" 'E makes nothing out of it. 'E's on shares like hus! 'E's a worried man, 'e is!" The second mate tapped the tip of his wooden leg on the ship's planks. " 'E's called unlucky Gully!"

"Like-as-not there's a good reason. We'd had whales if he had been cruising for them. He's afraid to take the chances. Didn't that hermaphrodite-rigged ship—the Pole Star—go by us with blubber on her jib boom. That means she got a whale. We didn't!"

The mate glanced at the ice-flecked waters of the North Bering.

"Whales," he said, "are scarce. One a season is a big catch, now."

The skipper creased his face with the only smile it had known in months of searching for elusive bowheads. He gave orders to cut the bear up and divide the portions between the engine-room crew, the galley crowd and the fo'castle hands.

Mike was unfortunate enough to get a steak that night which would have caused an Eskimo considerable trouble to digest. The Scotch-Irish engineer dragged it into the stokehold and started pounding it with a slice bar. He finished by tossing the meat into a fire door, where it blistered and shriveled, but did not burn.

He got down and stared at it like an ape peering through a jungle wall. Then he backed out of the stoke hold.

"A'm hungry!" he told Captain Gully as he climbed to the deck and glared aft. "A'd rather have codfish than bear."

"Perhaps we'll get a whale," said the skipper. "Then you won't have any complaint."

"Wot will A do with a whale?"

"Help eat it."

Mike went forward and leaned over the port-anchor davit. He studied the barren land of Alaska. It was white with early snow. There was no possible escape from the whaler.

He was somewhat appeased when the Cockney second mate brought out a juicy piece of bear's tongue which had been boiled to a turn.

"What's this whale food?" he asked as he popped the last piece of bear's tongue into his mouth. "The skipper says we can eat it."

"Most of it is muck-tuck—the black skin. Hit's a great dainty with the Kanakas."

"A'm not a Kanaka!"

"You'll like hit! Besides, there's the bleedin' heart and the liver and the brain. Some day they'll be raisin' whales like they raise cows. It'll settle the 'igh cost of living!"

Mike gulped and wiped away a tear.

"A don't mind sea food for a change," he said, "but A can't stomach it all ov the time. A'd sell my interest in this ship for a mess ov porridge."

Hardcastle squinted toward the coast. He ran a shrewd eye down the white line of tundra. His glance shifted to the north and west.

"We'll be driven ashore," he said, stamping his wooden leg. "There's a northwester coming up, by the glint on the clouds. That'll put us ashore."

"Better ashore than afloat. A hope the skipper goes into San Francisco without a pound ov bone."

"Most likely 'e will," said the second mate turning aft and squinting at the quarter-deck. "I wouldn't wonder if this is 'is last voyage. The owners will break 'im. 'E's got three chidren ashore. 'E's got a wife over Oakland way. 'E's just 'ard luck and thrifty."

"A would say penny wise and pun foolish. The others ov the fleet got whales."

"Some did—some didn't. It's all chance. I'll go notify the skipper o' th' wind. 'E's below eating the last of that bear. The cook scrambled the brains and pickled the paws. Bear's paws are rare."

Mike Monkey agreed with this statement. He watched the second mate stamp aft and disappear through the door at the break of the poop. He saw the walrus-like skipper emerge from the cabin-companion and waddle to the quarter-deck rail.

His voice, although not loud, struck over the ship.

"Up anchor, you there, forrard! Stand by the starboard catt. You there, edge steam on the winch. Get below then and shake your fires. Both watches lay aloft and loosen sail. Steady there, you at the wheel. Keep her steady till I give the order. Now, hard over. Hard over, you!"

The Northern Lights sheered from the shore and started out to sea. Ice was reached as the whaler starboarded and wallowed along the edge of the grounded pack. The wind swung over the great north fields and sent the fear of death into each man's heart. They were the last whalers in the Arctic.

Captain Gully, swaddled in wool and furs, stood the quarter deck as the watches merged into each other. He knew the coast like the palm of his fat hand. He caused hot water to be carried aloft and poured on the frozen blocks. He ordered Mike Monkey to use the last of the Japanese coal.

Under the double pressure from the straining canvas and the screw they gained the open mouth of Kotzebue Sound and then the Bering Strait. They passed through to the Bering Sea in a flurry of ice and snow. The wind-driven pack ice whimpered behind them like baffled wolves.

The long run down the Bering was made without sight of other ships or whales. The deck was a crusted sheet of ice. The standing rigging resembled a frosted Christmas tree. The sails were frozen to the spars and masts.

A watch was kept in case of a final blow from some hurrying bowhead which might be seeking the outlet to the North Pacific before the ice closed in for the winter. The crew lined the ancient rails and swung their arms to keep up circulation. They were fed on salt cod and lime juice. Now and then the skipper relented to the extent of a soggy plum duff scattered here and there with wormy raisins.

"A hope he's satisfied," was Mike's biting comment at the last of these plum duffs. "They remind me ov the muck ye can get from the top ov a boiler. They're taken from the bilge ov a flour barrel."

Mr. Hardcastle and Mr. Landyard both agreed with this statement. They had all gained weight, however, by eating sea food. The nipping air and exercise on deck had made for sovereign appetites.

The Northern Lights plunged through the rocky walls of Dutch Pass and emerged within the foggy waters of the North Pacific.

The course was set to make the first landfall at the California Coast. Captain Gully had given up all hope of fastening to a bowhead.

His perserverance, and the strict watch kept from the crow's nest and the fo'-castel-head, was rewarded.

A spout was sighted in a swelter of foam and murky sea. The ancient whaler came around like a clumsy dancer on a rocking floor. The boats were lowered, their sails set, they assumed a fan-shaped formation in order to intercept the next appearance of the whale.

It was Hardcastle, the Cockney mate, who fastened after an anxious twenty minutes of waiting, which is the time a whale stays below the surface of the sea.

The bowhead was outnumbered from the beginning. It started toward the

wind and the far-off ice. Three additional lines and bombs were driven into its gleaming blubber. It flurried and sounded in the last agony. It was brought alongside the Northern Lights after an hour of careful seamanship.

Mike Monkey assisted at the cutting in. He had never seen a whale stripped of its blanket pieces, bone and entrails. The job was in the hands of masters.

The straining tackles finally lifted the upper jaw to the waist of the ship. Mike leaned forward and stared at a mangy row of baleen. He turned to Captain Gully.

"Wot's them?" he asked.

The skipper's face was not illuminated by any great expression of good luck or fortune.

"Poor game," he said. "It's an old bull that won't weigh in over seven hundred pounds of bone. It's my last voyage."

"A should think it was mine," said Mike. "You took a lot of trouble to get them few whiskers." The irate engineer pointed toward the whalebone in contempt. He stalked through the blubber chunks which littered the deck and vanished down the engine room companion.

The sounds overhead during the early evening were those of a tired and somewhat discouraged crew getting the ship in shape to resume her passage for the California Coast. The whale carcass was cast adrift. It vanished to leeward. The deck was swabbed and squeegeed. The tackles and boats were made fast. The tattered sails were set.

Mike had no more coal for his single, double-door boiler. He had partly covered the engine with a tarpaulin. Its exposed parts were well greased with tallow and blubber. There was nothing to de below save wait for the landfall.

The mess boy appeared at two bells with a greasy pan of whale's liver fried in yellow grease. Mike sniffed the mess and called the stoke-hold and engine-room crews.

They walked around the pan then glanced at the engineer.

"A thought you were hungry," said Mike as he pinched his nose and turned his head away from the pan.

The five men who composed the crews had considerable to say. They cursed the skipper in lurid water-front argot. They damned the whaling service for all time. They ended up their combined anathemas by sitting down and consuming the mess. Then they went on deck. The stench of the liver and grease was more than their stout stomachs could stand.

Mike suddenly appeared at the head of the curved and rusty ladder which came up from the engine room. He closed a startled eye and stared toward the cook's galley out of which smoke was pouring.

Gliding aft like a quick cat, he burst into the cook's sacred kitchen.

"A'd like a wee bit ov that liver and grease," he said. "A would like a sample to show the owners. A'm so sick A'll sue them for damages."

"The skippers and the mates enjoyed it," said the cook grinning. "They sent for more. So did the fo'castle boys."

"Some ov them got stomachs like boilerplate. The skipper is a sea horse. He could eat anything. A've no doot he's saved many a penny this passage."

Mike took a tiny piece of liver fat which the cook handed over to him on the point of a cleaver. He went to the deck and leaned over the rail.

The ship wallowed on through the night. Her course was changed from watch to watch. Captain Gully was attempting to hold the Great Circle route from Dutch Pass to the Golden Gate. His navigation was done by aid of an ancient ivory-scale sextant and a doubtful chronometer whose rating was variable.

It was for these reasons that his first landfall was ninety miles north of the Farallones. The course was changed at the last moment to avoid a lea coast.

A revenue cutter, lying close into land, signalled the Northern Lights as the yards were braced around. A small boat came dancing over the sea.

The ensign who climbed aboard the whaler was the same naval officer who had fed Mike Monkey on board the cutter when that ship lay near the sandy point of the harbor of Unalaska.

"I hear you found the ambergris," he said to Captain Gully. "We received a radio that a whaleship cut in a rich bull whale in the North Pacific."

Captain Gully clutched the quarter-deck rail and glared down at the ensign who stood near the weather poop-steps.

"We saw no ambergris," he said.

"The Beluga reports finding a stinker from which almost all the ambergris was cut, with the liver and heart."

Captain Gully's mouth opened as Mike Monkey glided forward and interposed himself between the ensign and the poop-steps.

"A've no doot," said the engineer, "he wouldn't know it if he saw it. None ov us would. Wot's the stuff like?"

"It's diseased whale's liver," said the ensign. "It's used in making very fine perfumery. It's worth about two hundred dollars an ounce."

"An ounce?"

The ensign stared at Mike Monkey. "Yes, an ounce!" he declared.

Mike brought forth, from his greasy dungaree pocket, a leather poke. He opened it and held out a small piece of dried yellow fat.

"Is that ambergris?" he asked.

The ensign sniffed the offering. "It certainly is!" he exclaimed. "That's the stuff! Have you got any more of it?"

Mike pointed to the skipper.

"He ate the rest of it!" declared the engineer. "We all ate part ov it! A thought it was smelly liver fried in grease. A kept one piece to show the owners wot manner ov food ye get on whalers."

Captain Gully's face changed from a ruddy sea tan to a ghostly white. His walrus-like mustache bristled. His hands let go the quarter-deck rail. He staggered backward, recovered his balance and charged toward the poop-steps. Down these he tumbled and rushed for the cook's galley.

He emerged from the galley with the black cook close behind him.

"I done cooked it all," explained Sinbad. "You told me to cook it all. I served it in the engine room and the galley and in the cabin and forrard—just as you told me to do."

"What did you do with all that ambergris you got from Sinbad?" Captain Gully asked Mike Monkey.

"A ate some. Ye had some yourself. Ye were conserving food. A thought ye were hard luck!"

Captain Gully glared at the spindle-like form of the first engineer. He reached out a hand, seized Mike Monkey before he could dodge, and hurled him as far forward as the engine room companion. Down this opening Mike crawled. The ensign shrugged his gold-braided shoulders and went back to the revenue cutter. The Northern Lights wore away and took the course for the Golden Gate.

Through the night the whaler passed, with silence above and below. The orders given from the quarter-deck were mostly signs. The Yankee mate and the Cockney ice pilot opened a bottle of gin and forgot the distressing news they had heard concerning the ambergris. It was fate, they agreed, that the only fortune wrested from the northern waters had been served up as fried whale's liver and blubber.

It is a good thing for United States Senators that they are paid by the year. They would starve to death on piecework.—*Dallas News.*

NINE POINTS OF THE LAW

By ELWOOD BROWN

AT seven P. M. Billy Cunningham entered the O. K. Garage and, quietly stepping to the row of stored automobiles, let his gaze travel up and down the line, searching for something in particular. The quest was not difficult, for though the row was long—a testimonial to the prosperous business of the up-to-the-minute institution—the little Red Rover was a bit conspicuous and Billy located its shiny bright front near the far end of the low-lying building.

"No, you don't!" spat out big Jim Burling as Billy started to climb into the diminutive car. A detaining arm blocked his further progress. "Nothin' like it—see?"

Billy squared his average-sized shoulders. "I guess she's mine, and I have the legal right," he shot back.

"Nothin' o' the sort," came the low rumble of Burling's heavy bass. "An' don't talk law to me. Ain't I set up nights learnin' the law an' the rights of garage 'prieters? I know all about these here liens, 'tachments an' garnishments. This car don't move out o' here until you come across with the repair bill. Get me, William?"

That William "got" the general purport of the exposition was patent. "Now see here, Jim," he coaxed, "I've never denied the bill, have I? Can't a man be legitimately hard up once in a while?"

"That talk's floated the boat for the last time. There ain't nothin' lawful in the way you're hard up. Now this night studyin' has hardened me an' from now on I claim all in sight. Run along."

"Well, I can't pay now, and I must have the machine," and a sudden closing of the jaws changed the whole line-up of Billy's features. And, following the remark, he again started to climb into the seat.

A big, grease-stained paw sank heavily upon his shoulders. "I exercise my right o' lien on this car," came the voice, weighed with import.

From infancy Billy Cunningham had inherently claimed his right of way. Forcible restraint was a stranger to him.

"Take your hand off me, Burling," he said incisively. "I've got business tonight. This is my car." And he endeavored to wriggle free of the garageman's grasp.

The grip on his shoulder tightened. "You get off that step before I pull you off. My bill's got prior right 'bove everythin' else. The code says: 'Bills for repair—'"

"Never mind the code. My business is urgent. This is my car and, by glory, no roughneck—"

Burling, suddenly remembering, released him. "I'm no roughneck, an' I ain't goin' to commit no 'sault an' battery. I know the law. You come under trespassin'. This here garage is my castle an' the little, red car is a temp'rary chattel." The words came forth with a relish. "Now you better move or I'll call a cop."

"We'll see about this," spluttered Billy, impotently. "I'll give this matter to my attorney to-morrow."

"I don't need no 'torney," came back Burling. "You can't git her out without puttin' up bond, an' I know well enough you can't raise one. You're stuck if you do."

"What are you going to do with my car?" demanded Billy, changing his tactics.

"Sell it to myself for repairs an' storage, according to law."

"That's once you read your law wrong. This is a case of forcible detainer, and I'll have you criminally prosecuted," threatened the erstwhile possessor of the Red Rover car.

"That detainer stuff don't go. I read that too. You're going along. Good night."

In the face of the trespassing-castle exposition, Billy knew further argument was useless and, in high dudgeon, he walked out of the O. K. garage, breathing maledictions on its proprietor.

The evening's lark contemplated—business was farthest removed from Billy's intentions—probably would be compulsorily curtailed. The joy-ride finish, planned for his own little racer, loomed as a vanished allurement for, after paying the evening's entertainment, Billy knew there could be no surplus for the hiring of a strange automobile.

Additional trouble, in the person of one Burney McWade, credit manager of the Red Rover Automobile Agency, lay in wait for Billy at his apartment. McWade, wholly soured by the depressing nature of his job and, at the present moment pessimistically vengeful, without even the grace of a perfunctory handclasp, announced: "I've come to take back our auto. Where is she?"

"*Our* auto?" retorted Billy sarcastically. "Since when?"

"The auto is still the property of the Red Rover Co.," replied McWade in the voice of one announcing a contemplated bankruptcy. "By the contract-lease terms we hold title until paid in full. You are badly in default of your payments and have not responded to our letters. I ask you to deliver the machine to me now," and the lemon-flavored voice carried the souring note of a hopeless melancholiac.

Billy scratched one ear contemplatively and with a sense of returning pleasure. Two difficulties may be no worse than one. Scylla had nothing on Charybdis and possibly if matched against each other, both might lose their venom.

"I do not know that I am prepared to surrender *my* car. Have you a court order?" interrogated the delinquent payer.

"It is not necessary."

"And if I tell you that my car is resting in a legal castle, impregnable and stormproof, what would you say?"

"We are wasting time," came the tone of an ultimatum. "Where is the car?"

"Fortunately, it's where neither you nor I can get it," returned Billy, now blissfully happy. "I doubt if even a bench wanrant could remove it from its present legal entrenchment. That auto is in the possession of the Law, itself. You can't touch it."

"What are you driving at?"

"I don't care to tell you. McWade, you are a hell of a credit manager. I don't care to be guilty of ''sault an' battery,' so get out." Billy's words came forth in unctuous joyfulness.

"I'll not get out without our car."

"Your car, my car, or the other fellow's car, stays where it is. McWade, in addition to being a hell of a credit manager, you are also a trespasser. This very evening I learned the exact position of a trespasser. Get out, before I make you need all the accident insurance my company's got left."

McWade got out, and he got out wrathfully.

The affair had raised Billy's spirits again to normal, for he was now both evicted and evictor, and he dressed for the evening's pleasure with his usual light-heartedness. The legal status of the car's ownership was admittedly beyond his ken.

The clink of glasses in a certain Bohemian Red-Ink Joint mingled with the hilarious laughter of early morning revelers and the raucous notes of the cabaret

girls' alleged singing, and altogether suggested the general atmosphere of "the bars let down." But hardly "let down," only "lowered," for Billy belonged to that class that enjoys looking temptation in the face—and vanquishing it.

Billy's discourse with the girl at his side had ranged from insurance, which he had earnestly tried to sell her, to the influence of emotional singing on the nervous ganglia, of which he knew a shadowy little, to a very brief discourse on psychiatry and psycho-anaylsis, of which he knew still less, to carburetors, transmission, differentials, and the whole subject of automobiles, in which line of useful knowledge he was ahead of the voluminous latest books.

Altogether, Billy had enjoyed himself, and, though he had learned precious little of the girl at his side, she had responded with an intelligent understanding and enthusiasm that added zest to the conversation. At length, as the two were preparing for their departure, the restaurant door of the Palace swung wide and in breezed Jim Burling, dressed as a garage proprietor has no license to dress. Billy took in the ample starched shirt, long, flowing, full dress with its abnormally lengthy swallow tails, bright red carnation, and the complete detailed splendor of adornment. And, dangling on Jim Burling's arm, lending further grace to the whole, was a petite, highly colored bit of feminity, as to gown and face, daintily tripping her way in and smiling the gaudy smile that foretold nothing of good for the cavalier. Plainly, it was to be seen that Jim Burling and his day's profits were promised separation.

Billy glanced out of the window and his heart bounded within him. In the moonlight, the little red racer, *his* red racer, by right of his long love for it, glistened invitingly in the moonlight. Billy's blood went hot in his veins. Whatever the garage man's right of lien, by the Great Carburetor, no right of joy-riding was appurtenant thereto!

"We've certainly spent a delightful evening," the girl beside him was remarking. "Only one thing is missing. Do you know, I've dreamed joy-rides, and this evening, if only—"

"Are you game for an adventure," broke in Billy excitedly—"a real one!" Billy had noted Burling swagger to a far corner of the room without his being seen as he, Billy, retreated behind the wine list.

"Depends upon the limitations—"

"Such as temporarily borrowing another man's car?"

"You mean stealing?"

"Not so harsh. I care for my reputation."

"But if you got caught?"

"We won't. It's as safe as a risky thing dare to be."

"Are you talking paradoxes or life insurance?"

"Neither—joy-riding."

"For one short hour then. Afterwards, straight to my home. Then you can take your chance of returning the car."

Soon they were out in the street, Billy hovering over his Red Rover and wondering if she were in good trim. Surely she must be, for Burling was in the automobile business.

"Here we are. Hop in," invited Billy.

From his pocket Billy pulled a switch key, the one that throws on the magneto and called by the Red Rover Co., "the magneto key." It was all of ownership Billy had been able to retain in the car and the legal Burling had not dared to trespass on his person to the extent of removal. Billy turned on the gas, slapped his foot on the self-starter, let go the clutch, and they were off.

"How were you able to start it?" asked the girl pointedly.

"I owned a Red Rover once, and I've kept a key. I thought some day I might want to do this very thing."

"Regular professional, aren't you?" she beamed, with an admiring look in her eyes. "How superlatively clever you are.

Why don't you embark in the business? You sell insurance to people who are not able to keep up payments. One form of robbery is no worse than another."

Down the street they dashed at a merry clip, and a gladness, the sweetness of revenge, sang in Billy Cunningham's heart. Of speeding and the exhilaration of a sharp wind stinging his cheek, Billy never tired, and the warming presence of the vivacious young woman at his side added to the delight. And thoughts of the soon-to-be raging Burling, completed the large cup of ecstasy, of which Billy was drinking his fill.

Out on the suburban road during a quieting lull Billy gave more thought to his companion. He had known her but a short time; met her at a little gathering of the insurance clan, and had responded to her good looks and pleasing personality. He guaged her a strong-willed Salamander, of excellent control, and capable of alternating between a surprising degree of reserve and a surprising freedom. He had enjoyed her little sallies and, even more, her artistic compliments on his driving skill. Her last one: "Your mathematical accuracy in giving the sand-pile just the wistful touch and farewell," thoroughly pleased him, and a touch of seriousness, for the moment, was interrupted by:

"I am getting cold. Really, quite chilled. Let's run back to the city and get something piping hot."

"A good toddy?" he invited.

"No. Boiling hot soup," she answered instantly. He felt his judgment of her correct.

They drove in, stopped at a restaurant some distance from the Palace and ordered a light repast. The girl, somewhat tired, with a dignified reserve listened to Billy's running small talk, dropping in an occasional comment as she sipped her soup in quiet enjoyment.

"You did wrong to borrow the auto, even from a friend," she remarked after an interval. "Wherein will he find anything humorous in scouring the city, only to have his wrath stifled when he runs upon your beaming face?"

"All in the lark—my lark," responded Billy, carefree and happy. "And now, if you are rested, shall I drive you home?"

They walked leisurely to the sidewalk, Billy's face wide spread in a grin as he mused further on the discomfiture of the burly garage proprietor.

The grin suddenly died. Billy looked forth into an empty gutter. The street was void; the car gone.

"The miserable hound!" exploded the insurance man.

"Tit for tat," she chuckled merrily.

"That's not the point," wailed Billy. "It really was my car!"

"Your car? That explains. I thought you were too green to be a live one." Her voice was lightly taunting.

"A live one! Of course I'm not a low down—"

"Amateur," she derided. "Take me home first and then go steal it back again. I'll bet you see the police station before the break of gray dawn."

Her musical laughter rallied Billy and he quickly regained his good humor and resolved to follow her advice.

When Jim Burling, heavied with surplus food and drink, and lightened of intelligence and ready money, wended his wavering footsteps from the Palace, bearing on his more or less weakened right arm, the wavering bit of colored feminity, now blending a genuine carmine with the spurious in her cheeks, and found naught in the line of red automobiles, he let loose a cultured treatize on the law. "Stealin' is felony," he began to his companion. "No misdemeanor 'bout this. Grand Larceny, an' worse. Stealin' it night-time gets a bigger penalty than in daylight. An' I know who done it!" he suddenly burst out, his clearing senses bringing forth sudden wrath. "He'll get a jail sentence, too—"

"Free board, free lodgin'—" began the wastrel at his side. "Get me home, will you?"

"I'll put you on the street car an' good night to you. I'm goin' to get back my car an' 'rest the law-breakin' cur!"

The home going of the illuminated vagrant is an incident that in no way pertains to the vital elements of this story, but that there may be no ragged remnants to account for, it is necessary to state that the requisite carfare, and not one cent more, was advanced by the garage proprietor. J. Burling, henceforth, was bent on serious business.

Following the resolve to sell the car to himself for repairs and storage, Jim Burling had become firmly imbued, by repeated suggestion, with the idea that the act was as good as accomplished and the machine his by countenance of the law. It lent a powerful motive force to his actions.

And a measure of luck awaited the garage man, though not as expected. Reasoning that Billy Cunningham would probably take a spin into the country and then return to the city, Burling concluded that the insurance seller would possess sufficient sheer nerve to return to the very café from which he had stolen the machine and celebrate. It was very like Billy to do just that thing. So, with the Palace café as headquarters, Burling made short incursions in various directions, covering a radius of several blocks and noting each and every automobile. In the thinning traffic this was not difficult and Burling suddenly thrilled for, not a block away, he spied the little red racer, leisurely picking its way along and heading for that genial harbor, the friendly Palace of Red Ink.

The garage man scurried for the nearest policeman, and, by wizard luck, found one, fully awake and eager for business.

"Quick, officer! A stolen machine! Get the crook!" he shouted.

The policeman gave chase. He happened to be a lean one and of good digestion. The machine stopped on his demand, the driver indignant and demanding explanation.

Burling, coming from the rear, began his tirade while still some feet away. "You law breakin' pup," he boomed. "This means from two to ten years accordin' to the penal code. You robber, you, stealin' a car from under the very nose of a lady an' gentleman!"

He stopped suddenly and choked in his amazement. The man in the car was credit manager Burney McWade! And by his side was a woman. Evidently the couple were joy-ride bent.

"Who in hell are you?" blurted Burling.

"I do not know that I have the pleasure of your acquaintance," returned McWade icily, "and what do you mean by this brawling interruption?"

Burling knew not the man, but he knew the car. To make doubly sure, he looked it over, noting evidences of his own repair work.

"I thought you were somebody else," he began more mildly, "but that don't give you no legal right to steal my car!"

"Steal your car! Officer, this man is crazy. Will you kindly get out of my way! You are detaining a lady! This car belongs to me, always has belonged to me, and is mine until I sell or trade it."

Slowly Burling came to. "No, you don't, slick one," he began. "The smooth crooks are the biggest ones. Officer, I am owner, in fee simple, of the O. K. Garage. Here's my recommend," and he handed an ornate card impressively to the policeman.

"And I am salesmanager of the Red Rover; my card. Note this is a Red Rover machine."

"Officer," said the woman, plaintively, "this is very annoying and insulting to a lady."

"I'm sorry for you wimmin," remarked Burling, "when we men mix up with the law, but officer, I demand you arrest him, till we find out where we're at." Burling

was doing plainer and harder thinking than night lesson work, for the present knotty problem concerned the subject of lease rights *versus* lien right, and Burling, in spite of his superior information, admitted he was in waters very deep, and no friendly bottom beneath.

But the garage man's brain work was soon interrupted while dealing with first premises and the little gathering in front of the Palace was further shocked by an unexpected climax.

Billy Cunningham, with a second officer trailing—a fat one this time and very much shortened of wind—bore down upon the gathering. "Arrest him for stealing my car!" blazed the insurance man, sighting the garage proprietor first.

Billy's second remark was strangled in its infancy as his subsequent gaze fell upon the prim visaged McWade, the last man in the world to be expected before the Palace at three A. M.

"Ah!" he beamed forth. "The stern man of credit! And now a king of joy riders! McWade, I didn't know *you* were a thief. Officer, both of these scoundrels are thieves. Arrest them both."

"What you doin' here, Jerry?" asked the lean cop of the fat one.

"Same as you," responded the second encouragingly.

Jim Burling, fighting for his own interests, struggled for the floor. "There's jobbin' done here, officer. These chaps have planted this whole thing. That car left my garage this evenin', with me in it. Go 'phone my place. Look up the name yourself. Don't let either of them chaps get away."

Burney McWade, badly handicapped, and desiring no undue publicity, began in his most business-like tones: "Officers, this car was sold by me on lease payment to Mr. Cunningham here. He has not met his payments. Automatically we come into possession—"

"Automatic possession by thievery at three o'clock in the morning," shot forth Billy. "Not on your life. That's my car and my name's on it. Officer, let me show you—"

Burling's powerful voice broke through again: "Officer, I know the law. Whatever those other chaps say, I'll show the repairs I made all over that car. Here you," to the woman on the seat, "get off that a minute. I'm going to show these officers—"

The fat cop turned to the lean one. "Percy, what'll we do?"

"Run 'em all in, Jerry," returned the lean Percy. "All three of the gents is stealin' the car from every other gent. It's a nest of crooks. I don't like that McWade chap, anyway."

"Me neither," returned Jerry.

The three midnight adventurers began to hedge. Particularly did McWade trim his sails.

"Gentlemen," he argued, "this seems to be—ah—er—a bit complicated. Possibly we all think we have rights to this machine. Mr. Cunningham has his name on my car. I have in my pocket the same signature to a lease contract, which I will show you. I will admit I took the empty car from in front of the Imperial—solely because I believe it my right by automatic abrogation—"

"Anything but that word," broke in Billy.

Jim Burling, hoping to get the car back to his garage in preference to the Police Station, again fought his way in. "I got a proposition for you. I got some law books out at my garage. Supposin' we all go out an' look up our sides an' settle it between ourselves. What do you cops say?"

"Nothin' doin'. You fellers may be all right, but this whole thing may be a plant. Then, you see, we get credit for the number of arrests we make. We're havin' a contest now an' I'm way ahead and Jerry has agreed to allow me to pull in any joint stuff we get. You fellers and the boat all go in. Exceptin' this; Jerry can take the lady home."

Burney McWade sighed the sigh of intense relief.

The program was carried out, and at about four A. M. the three owners, equity holders, parties with inherent or acquired rights, lined themselves up before the desk sergeant.

"Hello, Billy," greeted the sergeant, "what you mixed up in? Come in to sell me another policy?

"And you, Jim Burling, as I live!" he greeted again. "Got a second-hand Pearl at a knockdown?"

"And if it ain't McWade himself!" he beamed still further. "This is what I call pot luck. Come in boys and we'll have a little game. The ante's off; only for fun, you know—"

"Serious business first," announced Billy. "I wonder if you couldn't act for the judge. We'll place our facts before you."

"Sure. Take my decision, no protest?"

And each litigant put forth his argument; Burling, in particular, releasing gems of legal acumen.

"I'd like to see this little red racer," announced the sergeant. "Maybe just the thing I want to buy. I'll get flashlights and we'll look her over."

Two police officers and three widely variant business men sauntered out upon the sidewalk to take a look at a very interesting little red car. The moon, now partly hidden by a rift of clouds, cast an uncertain light upon the scene, a light that, because of its changing shadows, was hardly better than no light at all. The grim walls of the police station bulked to one side and the dirty street flanked the other. All was quiet and still.

Two flashes blazed a light where the little red racer had been left, and then flared up and down the street.

Five startled "Ohs" filled the stillness of the night. For the third time the car was gone!

Blankly the disputants looked from one to another. The situation was too tense for speech. Finally, the garage-lawyer remarked, disconsolately and with feeling: "Our three equities must of jointly an' sev-rally gone to blazes."

Billy Cunningham, puzzling the loss, suddenly felt a deathly sickening within, as he groped toward the solution. He plunged his hand into an upper pocket, searching for his magneto key. The pocket was empty.

"She's the only professional thief in the lot," he muttered dejectedly. "We're all raw amateurs," and he told his miserable story.

Out on a well paved highway a neat little red racer was humming her way along on a real joy-ride at last. A young man and a young woman, husband and wife, experts in the wrong business, sat in blissful comfort.

"The easiest city we've struck," remarked the woman. "Sixteen jobs, every one a success and we crown our efforts by making our getaway from under the very nose of the Police Station—the safest place for a crook in all the wide world. I only have one little regret," she concluded. "He was such a likable, spontaneous chap and really meant me no wrong. I hope he never owned the car."

Nowadays a nickel is about as useful as a glass eye at a keyhole.—*New York American.*

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS TO GO

By LEO NOBLE BURNETT

IN addition to being broke, Williams was intoxicated—not an unfamiliar condition. For ten years he had been gambling away the family honor and the family fortune. He was entirely rid of the honor and that he was broke would imply that he had squandered the fortune. In a strict sense, however, he could hardly be called broke. There was still $100, a sacred little sum for the emergency of a funeral. In the ups and downs of a gambling career, he had been discreet enough to snatch aside enough for his last rites, and it had never occurred to him that the money was available for any other purpose than the emergency.

He arose from the table stiffly—limb by limb. A shaky pause to gain his balance, a stagger, a shamble, and he was out of the rear door into the alley. The men were too busy nodding over their cards to notice, except one—a puffy, red fellow, who came tottering doorward. "I say, Jim, don't go just yet," he said limply, but Williams was leering down the alley. Then the door was shut, cutting off the warm odor of smoky beer fumes. In flaccid relaxation, he leaned against the side of the building.

The light from a timid Fifteenth Street lamp penetrated into the alley and partly showed his face—pale, thin, nervous and sensitive. He appeared to be a man of refinement, well dressed and probably thirty. A little black mustache would have made him handsome. He took something from his overcoat pocket—a small revolver. He regarded it with his head tilted to one side, gave a hopeless little laugh, and put it back into his pocket.

"Better wait till I get to the house," he said.

If the nearby clock had not struck four or some other hour, he would have fallen asleep to awake in a police station, but it was conveniently four o'clock before the alcoholic doze had entirely conquered him, and he took a sudden brace. He turned up his coat collar, set his derby aright and put on his gloves, rocking unsteadily.

When intoxicated, Williams always tried to be a gentleman. In fact, he carried his gentlemanliness to the extent of profuse politeness. He passed out of the alley and up the street. Upon meeting occasional four o'clock wanderers, he removed his hat and bowed, nearly upsetting himself. Frequently he laughed and seemed not at all like a man who contemplated suicide. Williams had determined, however, that when the city awoke its population should be decreased by one. Why not make a final settlement with himself when he could pay his funeral expenses? The money was the excuse and the revolver was a sort of incentive. Without either, suicide for Williams would have been quite impossible.

He continued several blocks, upholding his body and his drunken dignity. A weazened little lad, strangely alone on the street, pushed a paper before his face. Williams laughed, and taking a childish delight in confiding his condition to someone, even to a newsboy, he pulled out his wallet and opened it. To his surprise, a lonesome dime fell out and rolled toward the gutter. He pointed to

it; the boy gave him the extra and scrambled after the money. Williams forgot the money and the boy, clutched the paper and continued, his footsteps echoing loudly in the big empty street.

Turning a corner, he emerged from the fashionable thoroughfare into one of those poor little districts which often exist like little rotten spots, in the very heart of a city. It was the street by the river, crowded for the most part by wholesale houses and nondescript places of business. Dismal window displays thrust up before him the waxen figures of women, uncanny spirits in dresses and hats at reduced prices. On the corner he recognized the tombstone shop which he had passed so frequently on his way to and from his room. Its grim significance stirred him, and he recalled, with a giddy little laugh, the girl whom he had seen in there among the tombstones. The incongruity of the thing tickled him.

Two blocks more, and he halted before a pathetic stone building of dilapidated grandeur. He passed up two flights of stairs, stumbled along an extremely narrow hall and pushed open a door. Switching on a light, he tossed his paper on the table. Then he balanced for a moment and half tried to remove his overcoat. The effort was too much and he sank into chair. His eyes closed and his head bent forward.

It was a littered little chamber, with papers strewn about and dirty clothes heaped on a trunk in the corner. The iron bed appeared not to have been made for several days, the spreads hanging off on the floor. The bureau was covered with collars and toilet articles, and cigarette stubs had burned small black holes in the white spread.

He sat for more than an hour, sometimes raising his head, and then letting it drop back. Dim morning light began to pry through the single window and out on the street were occasional sounds, indicating that alarms were going off and that the city entertained serious thoughts of getting up. In fact, the tendency became of local significance when a clock exploded in a room directly overhead.

Then Williams opened his eyes, held his hand to his head and stood up. He stared for a moment in bewilderment, but his features gradually cleared. Pulling off his gloves, he proceeded to the bureau where he finally located a roll of bills in the top drawer. He passed unsteadily to the table where he made his last testament on a scrap of paper. "For my Funeral," he wrote, and placed the slip on the roll of bills. He produced the revolver and looked at it with a real affection. It was a finely-made instrument—the last remnant of family possessions.

For a few moments he stared vacantly, his black eyes grayish. He saw the newspaper and thought for the briefest second how the reporters might invade the place later in the day. Then he laughed, a self-despising little expression, and deliberately raised the revolver, pressing it against his head. His thin face twitched, and his whole body was vibrant with nervousness and suspense. He counted: "One—two—"

But Williams never reached the third count.

It was merely an advertisement in the paper spread out before him. Having caught the bold letters in the first line, he dropped the revolver and leaned intently over the paper.

"By God," he said, "I've got twenty-five dollars to go!"

He laughed immoderately, and read the advertisement again:

$75—FUNERALS—$75

Complete in Every Detail, Including Grave in Any Cemetery, $75 up. Why Pay More?

IN THE HOUR OF DISTRESS WE TREAT YOU WITH REFINEMENT AND COURTESY

Williams didn't finish reading it, but scrambled to his feet, dropping the bills and the revolver into his overcoat pocket. He picked up his hat from the floor, where it had fallen during his doze and hurried from the room.

"Twenty-five dollars to go!" he announced to the milkman in the lower corridor.

The city was now rubbing its eyes. Delivery wagons, auto trucks and workmen with pails were beginning to appear on the street. The sun appeared uncertainly between two buildings and a clock somewhere pounded six times. Williams was much steadier than he had been two hours before. He was a little unstable, to be sure, and it was with some difficulty that he tacked his way back to the saloon. He found a negro busy with a mop, and chairs piled on the tables. The odor displeased him and he hurried back into the street.

He soon found himself before a furniture display window, looking at iron beds. One with shiny brass knobs struck him as a splendid example of bedcraft, but the price tag said $30, and he passed on.

Later he gazed into a window, the central object of which was a big green lamp with elaborate moss rose trimmings. A wretched woman was also looking at the display.

"How much do you suppose it costs?" he asked.

She smiled doubtfully.

"Damned pretty thing, that lamp," he murmured; "damned pretty thing."

Forgetting the woman, he went into the store, where a sleek little lad was sweeping out.

"Twenty-seven," announced the boy.

"Couldn't make it twenty-five, could you?" bargained Williams.

The boy was very sure that such a reduction was possible, but bosses wouldn't arrive until eight. Williams wasn't quite sure that he wanted a lamp, anyway, and he passed along.

He lingered about shop windows and gazed into them with a pathetic hopelessness. He became discouraged and greatly sobered. Wandering aimlessly, his steps had led him back to the riverside street where his own rooming house was situated. Nor here were there any attractions for men about to die. It struck eight and Williams wondered if he had better go back and see about the lamp, when he found himself before the tombstone store on the corner. The darkness of early morning had given the shop a grim meaning, but now it stood out instantly as a solution. Besides, here was the girl's face smiling at him between two obelisks, as girls smile from the box offices of small theaters.

Tombstone shopping suddenly assumed unlooked-for attractions, and he entered straightway. The girl had a broom with which she had been digging around the bases of the monuments. She smiled again, more timidly than between the intervening obelisks. She was a delicate girl, and not very striking. She had uncertain brown eyes and indefinite brown hair. She looked Williams over, but didn't perceive that he was at all drunk, and never once dreamed that he expected to drive a bullet into his head as soon as he had disposed of twenty-five dollars. But she could not be criticized for any lack of insight on this score, for Williams was not exactly drunk, and at this particular time the revolver was most remote from his mind.

The Tombstone Girl only noticed that he was pale, well barbered and a little dissipated. But if a man is fair enough looking, well dressed and barbered, the average woman can overlook dissipation. Some of them even prefer it. And the Tombstone Girl was average.

He bowed politely, and she leaned her broom against a tombstone, waiting for him to speak.

Is suddenly occurred to him that he was in a place of business. He had come in to look at tombstones and said as

much. She stepped forward to show him, asking if he had any particular pattern in mind.

"This looks like a pretty good one," he ventured, putting his hand on a large monument with ferns and cattails carved on one side; "how much?"

"I think that is three hundred dollars," she answered.

On the other side of the room were piles of small marble slabs. He fancied that the little ones were more his style and stepped over to them, followed by the girl.

"How much are these?" he asked timidly, touching one with his foot.

"They range from twenty to thirty-five dollars," she replied. "I think this one is especially dear," and she bent over to lift it to an upright position. In spite of its small size it was rather heavy and he zealously assisted her. Then they stood looking at each other. She was flushed by the exertion, and slapped her hands together to brush off the dust.

"Don't you think it is dear?" she asked finally.

"Oh, yes," he said; "pretty thing, that stone, da— awfully pretty thing."

Then he actually did look at the stone. It was a plain white slab—as conventional a tombstone as can possibly be imagined. Its dusty white monotony was relieved only by a pair of clasped hands near the top.

"Isn't that er—a little out of date?" he suggested.

"No, indeed," she assured him; "a stone like that can never become old-fashioned, and if you don't care for the hands, we have several other patterns. There is a lamb design which is always good on a tombstone."

Williams had aristocratic notions about graveyards, and somehow neither clasped hands nor symbolic lambs made any appeal to his taste. He said that a larger stone might be more acceptable and she led the way to a small monument. It had a substantial base, and the top portion was very decently polished, with leafy pillars at the corners. This impressed him, and he inquired the price.

"That," she stated, "is one hundred dollars. You see, the polished ones come higher."

"Oh, it's most reasonable," he assured her, "extraordinarily reasonable. The polished ones come higher of course."

"It's a splendid stone," she said. "I've always wanted it for mother's grave."

Williams always did things by extremes—impassioned, impulsive things. He suddenly found himself sorry for the girl, and his pity was as sincere and wholesome as a highpitched nature would allow.

"Couldn't some of the other relatives chip in?" he ventured, holding his chin thoughtfully.

"There aren't any other relatives," she explained, catching his sincerity and becoming confidential. "Of course, there is Uncle," she added. "He runs this store. He will be here soon, and if you wish to wait for him, he may make some reduction on this stone. You see, we're not having such a terrible rush in tombstones at this season."

They stood facing each other, leaning against opposite corners of the monument.

There was an awkward pause, during which Williams's mind subordinated the orgies of past years and became centered in this dingy universe of a tombstone shop. But the situation was hazy and the unraveling was interrupted by the girl, who asked if he would like to look at some more stones.

"No," he answered, "I guess not."

He studied her with a sane criticism. "I say, girl," he said, leaning toward her, "is that straight about the old—about your mother's grave?"

He saw that he had been undiplomatic. "I'm sorry," he said in apology, "but I just wanted to say that I'll take this stone, this one here, the hundred dollar one."

The girl's face brightened with real

candor. "I think that is—well, it is dear of you," she exclaimed; "it will help me to keep my job, for I have been here a whole week and I have sold just one tiny slab." In a business-like fashion, she went to the table and took up a memorandum. He went over and sat on the edge of the table opposite her, somehow happy that it was dear of him.

"I suppose you want it engraved," she said.

"Yes, to be sure," replied Williams thoroughly startled from his reflections. "But, say, there isn't any hurry about this thing. Just let the engraving go for a while."

"Perhaps you will leave your name anyway," she suggested.

To all of his late associates, Williams had been plain "Jim," and it was with a tingling of pride that he stood erect and seized the lapel of his coat.

"My name," he announced, "is Williams—James E., Junior."

He was about to inquire the name of the girl, when a fussy woman in a filmy black veil entered the shop. Williams hastened to pay for his purchase, taking the roll of bills from his pocket and counting them out to her. He wanted to say something more, but the customer was fretting as customers do. Just then he startled himself with an idea.

"Miss—Miss Tombstone Girl," he faltered, "will you go to dinner with me tonight?"

The girl gave an affirmative nod.

"How's six?" he asked.

She nodded as she put the last bit of the Williams fortune into the cash drawer.

He left the store and got a last glimpse of her as she smiled from behind the confidence-inspiring obelisks. He walked lightly and smiled. On the corner he joined a group of people who were waiting for a car. He had no place in particular to go, but wanted to go somewhere. As the car approached, he saw the people getting out their purses and realized that he had left his last cent in the tombstone shop. He who cannot pay carfare should not ask women to go a-dining. Williams saw with a cold, startling lucidity, that his financial condition must be improved before evening.

A beautiful face makes a man resourceful. If the Tombstone Girl was not beautiful she was at least pretty and prettiness had the same effect on Williams.

Across the street was a little gray shop. It bore this sign:

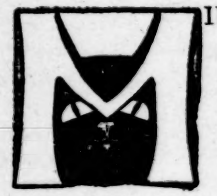
ISAAC M. STEIN
PAWNBROKER

He passed over at once and drew the revolver from his pocket. He laughed slightly as he entered—a sane, sober, promising laugh—holding tenderly in his palm this last lucky remnant of family memories.

Although Kerensky is now working in a restaurant we continue to admire him. Kerensky failed to live up to the scenario and did not develop into a second Napoleon. But he did something few Russians of his class were willing to do—he married the girl.—*Philadelphia Public Ledger.*

FROM OUT THE CENTURIES

By CHARLES J. SULLIVAN



IDNIGHT on the Beira plaza of Montevideo, and moonlight on the sea. The captain and I had been sipping Bokadi for hours, and three times he had told me of his son, lost with the Wanderer, at sea, three years before. And each time I had sighed and nodded and sipped again, because I knew that the old man's grief was dry.

Now I sat and watched the standing lights of the cruiser Arizona, swinging with the tide. That she was swinging reminded me that soon the captain would be going aboard, and with the thought came the old longing for the States. I turned toward him to ask if I might sail with him, but I did not ask. Instead, I followed his gaze into the shrubbery along the sea-wall. I saw a shadowy figure of a man stumbling toward us from the darkness. He did not need to stumble, but he walked with his face turned toward the sea, and only when he ran into a palm or bush, did his dreamy eyes leave the moonpath across the water.

The sound of the waves against the sea-wall bothered him. He clasped his hands over his ears, but still he stared out over the golden path, following it with his eyes, from the horizon's end to where it was splintered at the surf.

"Listen," he was saying. "Don't you hear him calling?" He pointed out over the sea-wall and glanced at us anxiously. "*Can't* you hear him? Listen!"

We heard the babel of voices from the other tables scattered through the plaza, the sleepy squawling of the gulls, and the swish-swash of the water. But the man was repeating in a slow, monotonous voice:

"Listen! Listen! Don't you hear him calling? Oh, if only that golden path were solid, and I could walk it out to him!"

The bridge-bell on the Arizona tolled the first bell of the mid-watch, and the captain moved as though to go down to the docks. He was to sail at dawn, but for some reason he sat down again and laughed.

"A red rum stew," he grunted, looking toward the man. "It makes them do funny things. I had one come aboard once at Bahia Blanca, who wanted to count the buttons on my uniform. He—" Suddenly the skipper lurched across the table, and clutched my arm.

"Man, look at that face!" he whispered. "Look quick!"

The man had turned, facing the light. His was the face of Galahad. But it seemed the face of one who had sought other grails than the holy one. The lips were drawn tightly across the teeth, like those of a man who had often clenched his jaws in pain or sorrow. His chin was trembling, and beneath the bulge of his great coat we could see his little white throat throb pitifully. His dress was that of a sailor in a storm—a great bulging coat and shapeless pants, and a sou'wester that was much too large for his little head. Yet, withal his strange attire in such a conventional place, the most wonderful thing about him was his eyes. They were great, tender, womanish eyes, that lured your gaze from whatever else about him you were looking at, as a magnet draws a needle.

Those eyes—they stared at everything

about him with a vague, babyish wonder, that was childishly strange, above those straight-drawn lips and sea-browned face. The lights were the source of endless amazement to him, and he would not come nearer to them than the end of our table. The table itself, the bottles and glasses, our uniforms, the waiters scurrying to and fro, puzzled him as a mirror puzzles a monkey. Plainly he had never seen such things before, and, after a dazed inspection, he started to back away from us, into the shrubbery beyond the lights.

"Come back," called the captain laughingly, "come back and have a drink. You look as though you needed one."

At the sound of the English words, in such a place, the man started forward quickly, then hesitated.

"You Americans?" he asked.

"Si, si!" grinned the old captain.

He came nearer. Surely he was not English nor American himself, for he spoke with difficulty and with a strange accent, that was not exactly like an illiterate Spaniard, speaking Key West English. I helped the captain to coax him into a seat between us. I passed him a glass of Bokadi, and he sipped it doubtfully, very much astonished that the wine was cold. Though he did not like it, he drained the glass, and it steadied him. He did not speak of the calling voice again, though he turned every few minutes and gazed into the night as though he could see far beyond the path of gold.

"Come, lad," said the captain, with a wink for me, "you act strangely; your words are not like ours. I have never seen such shoes as yours, nor such eyes in a man. How did you come here?"

When the boy looked up, his eyes were sparkling with tears. He spoke softly:

"You Americans—like Jimmy?"

"Like Jimmy?" smiled the captain. "Yes, we're Americans like Jimmy—like Jimmy used to be," he added under his breath.

"You know about New York?" asked the lad.

"Yes, I sail for there at dawn."

"You know about a place called Virginia by New York?"

"By New York?" laughed the skipper. "Yes, I live in Virginia. I'm an F. F. V. It's a big state, you know." But the lad did not know.

"You know about Jimmy, eh?" he asked. "That's where he lives. What you call 'my dear old dad' lives there now, but Jimmy—" he turned again and looked out over the sea.

Something in the boy's constant use of the name, startled the captain, and made his old lips tremble.

"Jimmy?" he asked. "Jimmy who? Did you know his last name?"

"Kerry!" said the boy promptly. "Jimmy Kerry."

The old man gasped and fell back in his chair as though he had been struck, and I could only sit and stare. Presently, I went to the captain and straightened him in his chair. I feared for his heart, but in a few minutes he laughed at his foolishness.

"It can't be, can it? He was on the Wanderer," and he smiled up at me sadly. Then to the boy:

"No, I don't know about Jimmy—about this man. Who was he? Where did you see him?"

"Jimmy was on the Wanderer," said the boy. His words were the ones we had been whispering to ourselves! The old captain had driven away the flutter of hope by mumbling them. In our dumb silence the lad went on.

"He came to our island on the Wanderer a long time ago. She went back to her home, but Jimmy stayed. He loved—he—"

The captain leaped forward like a tiger.

"Say it again!" he cried. "Say it again! What was the name of the ship?"

"The Wanderer," said the boy.

The old skipper reached out and

clutched a wine glass. The stem snapped like an icicle. He held a match to his cigar, but his hand trembled and shook it out.

Every sea-goer remembers the Wanderer, as every American remembers the Maine. Five years before, she had sailed from Hampton Roads on a special service mission, to find and chart an island which had been reported by a storm-driven tramp, about five days out from Montevideo. She had been gone nearly a year, when she was sighted on her homeward cruise off Maise Light. From there she had wirelessed by way of Guantanamo and Key West, that she had found the island, but after that, she had never been heard from. Scout cruisers picked up one of her boats and two buoys, but nothing else of her was ever found. That was three years ago.

Now, here before us was a grotesque figure of a man, with soft womanish eyes and sea-browned face, telling us of the same ship, and of one of her crew. We sat silent before him for a long time, while he stared around him like a baby in a zoo. The beautiful women with their brilliant dresses seemed to interest him more than anything else, and he asked unanswerable questions.

"Won't you tell us about the Wanderer?" asked the captain quietly.

"She came to our island a long time ago," said the modern Galahad.

"What was the name of your island?"

"We called it the Isle of Magelhaens until Jimmy came. He made us speak American all the time after we learned it. You would call it Magellan's Island."

"How many of you were there on the island when the Wanderer came?"

"How many?" said the boy doubtfully. "Oh, I don't know. We never counted each other. There were all the Bontouri families, the Verrazanni, the de Cotres, the Maluci, and our house, which was the largest, the Matavi. I suppose there were five hundred then, and many more buried on the hill by the old church."

The captain and I sat back in our chairs and gasped.

"Five hundred of you and many more buried by the church?"

The lad was surprised at our surprise. "Didn't the men of the Wanderer tell you about us when they came back?" he asked.

I heard the bell of the big cruiser strike the first hour of the midnight watch; a launch put away from her side and came bobbing shoreward. The skipper did not see it. He saw nothing of the thinning crowds around him. He watched the lips of the boy, afraid to miss a word.

And those words were not ones to be missed! We were hearing a tale from out the centuries, a reading from the logs of Captain Magellan of four hundred years before. I smiled a little at first, but as the lad went on telling how he had learned all this from a log written by one of Magellan's captains after he had been wrecked with a shipload of women and men on a strange island, I began to believe him, for I remembered.

I knew enough of history to know that when Magellan reached the straits that now bear his name, two of his captains deserted with their ships, and turned back for Spain. One of them dropped into Ferrol a year later, but the other, a barkentine, under the command of Captain Mesquita, was never heard from again. In my imaginative days at school I had often wondered what had been the fate of this preciously-laden ship. Had it drifted into the jungle shores of Brazil or the dune-covered beaches of the South? Now here was a boy telling us that it had been wrecked on a tiny island in the equatorial Atlantic; that its crew and their women had made the place into a paradise, and had lived and prospered there; that he, himself, was a descendant of them.

In quick, gasping phrases, he told us as much as he had learned from the ancient logs about the strange island and its new race. He told of their strange, social-

istic laws and customs, and he told of his own youth and the queer games he and the other children had played on the palm-fringed shores. But when he began to speak of the Wanderer, his voice grew softer, and I thought there was a tone of pride in it. When he spoke of the surprise of the men at finding white men on the island, he laughed like a child, but the next instant, when he told of Jimmy acting as interpreter, tears started into his eyes and he looked away over the sea.

"Jimmy," said he, "was the only man of the crew of the Wanderer who learned to understand us. Others of the officers could speak Spanish but it was the sort they do not speak in Spain, and Jimmy said that our language was so pure that the men who had learned Spanish along the coast could not understand it. So Jimmy was detailed as interpreter and to study us, and to find out if we wanted to leave the island. He was with me most of the time, for I was the school-teacher then, and—and—"

The boy hesitated a little, then glancing shyly at the captain went on.

"In a few days Jimmy was in love. There was the old church on the top of the hill in the middle of the island, and this girl whom he had begun to love was about the only one who knew how to get up to it without wading through an ocean of vines. This girl's name was Arda of the Matavi family.

"One day, while the party from the ship was prowling around the beaches with paper and pencils and measures, Jimmy and Arda climbed the trail to the little church. In the olden days, the people used to go up there to worship, but when gold was found beneath it, another and smaller shrine was built along the shore, and everybody was forbidden to visit the old church. The old men feared that the gold would cause discontent and trouble, and they ordered the mine to be covered. Enough metal was taken out to make a few trinkets for the women, and for things that were needed around the home, but that was all.

"The church was not so interesting as Jimmy had expected, nor the mine either, for after roaming around awhile, he led Arda out on to the moss-covered façade, and there they sat silent a long time. At the foot of the hill they could see the strangely dressed men and boys working among the yams and pineapples. Along the beach were a few idlers, or old men, watching the Wanderer as she swung with the change of the tide. Jimmy, too, saw the Wanderer—saw the men holystoning the white decks of his sea-home, and the officers pacing up and down the quarterdeck. He knew that in another week he would have to return aboard. In a month she would be back in the States. Did he want to go without this little pleasant-eyed girl who loved him? He turned toward her and saw that she, too, was watching the ship. Her lips were parted in silent wonder. Her eyes were wet with unshed tears. She loved this beautiful island, she loved every one of the people on it. Often she had wondered what was beyond the blue line where sky and ocean met, but her wonder had never become a longing. Now she had come to love this stranger. Would she want to go away from the island with him? Her throat and bare shoulders were golden in the light of the setting sun. She knew that she was beautiful. Suddenly she caught her loose camisa closer to her breast, and turned to the man at her side.

"They did not need to speak, but in the same breath they whispered the English words, 'I love you.'

"Then, as the afterglow faded from one cloud to another, until it was only a red splotch in the West, Jimmy asked the question which he had so dreaded to ask.

"'Arda,' he whispered, 'will you go back with me when the Wanderer sails?'

"Arda, too, dreaded the question, but she answered quietly, 'Yes, I'll go anywhere with you.'

"At dark she led him back through

the dim trails to the homely village by the sea, led him by the hand to her father's house, and in front of her aged father, himself. And Jimmy talked to the old man, and Arda pleaded with him, but in vain. The Britons might take any of the people who wished to go, but Arda could never leave the island. That was final. Matavi liked Jimmy and gave him permission to make his house his home until the Wanderer sailed, but at that time he must leave Arda behind.

"In the morning, Jimmy went out to the ship and brought back books and papers and maps. He read to Arda of the fall of Spain; and of America, the land of which she had never heard. Day after day they went to the church on the hill, not to gloat over the hidden wealth there, but to be alone and to study. Jimmy put a dot in the middle of the great Atlantic and taught her the exact location of the island. He explained to her why no other ships ever touched there, and why, every day, great steamers passed within a few hundred miles of it without ever coming near. But most of all, he talked of his native country, his home, his mother and his dear old dad, who was a captain in his country's navy. Arda was always interested, but all she said in English was 'I love you!'

"At last came the day before the dawn of sailing. Old man Matavi and Jimmy and Arda held a long consultation. In the afternoon, Jimmy went out to the Wanderer, and returned immediately with a bundle beneath his arm. He was very calm and smiling. From the house of the Matavi, he and Arda slipped out to the trail leading to the church. At dusk Arda came out carrying the bundle. Jimmy climbed on up to the church and, ascending into its tower, sat and looked down on the beach. He tried not to look at the Wanderer at all, but when he did, his eyes were misty.

"By a roundabout way, Arda came down to the beach where Jimmy was accustomed to take his daily swim with the other officers from the ship. There she unwrapped the bundle and took from it an ensign's uniform. She was laughing joyfully, hugging the soft blouse to her breast. Carefully, she strewed the clothes on the beach, a few yards back from the water. Then looking up to the tower, that loomed weirdly against the sunset sky, she removed her shoes and the cocoa tapis from about her hips, and tying them on her head, she walked down the sand into the water. When the smaller waves began breaking into her face, she waved her hands at the turret window, then swam down the shore toward the village.

"So the Wanderer did not sail at dawn. She fired one of her saluting guns to greet the sun, rang eight angry-sounding bells for Kerry's return, and unfurled the recall pennant at her foremast. When the sun had climbed high above the church on the hill, a boat was lowered and rowed hurriedly ashore. The officer in charge came directly to Arda and asked about Ensign Kerry. She told him that he had been seen last going down to the beach for his plunge. The squad hurried down the shore, and Arda and half the population followed after them. They found the uniform on the beach, saw the footprints leading down to the water, and none returning. Out across the bar they saw the green triangle of a shark's fluke, slipping through the water. A signal boy wig-wagged the message to the skipper, and after a few minutes, a boy from the bridge signalled for them to return aboard. At noon the Wanderer got under way, and we never saw them again."

The old captain's face was a ghastly thing to see. He stretched out a trembling hand and caught the sleeve of the boy.

"And Jimmy Kerry?" he croaked. "He deserted? He remained safe on the island, and his ship went out to her doom? He deserted, and for the sake of a girl, a girl? Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy!"

Very gently, the lad unfastened the fingers from his sleeve and placed the hand beneath his on the table.

"Jimmy said," he whispered, "that his dear old dad would have done the same for his mother. Do you suppose he would?"

The captain didn't answer. Across the bay, the beacon of the Mount and the Beira lights of Montevideo glistened like the settings for a fantastic play. A waiter came with bottles and ice, and at the sight of our faces he winked wisely at me and went laughing away.

"That same night," continued the boy, in a voice that was so much the same that it seemed forced, "that same night, Jimmy and Arda were married. De Pauso, the priest, married them. Old Matavi gave them the house that had belonged to Alvaric, the gardener. There they lived and were happy—how unearthly happy, I cannot tell you. Jimmy became a fisher, and all were glad that he had stayed—all but one. Alvaric considered himself doubly insulted. First, it was known that he had long admired Arda, and second, his house had been taken from him and given to his rival. Alvaric swore to be revenged. He was not a bad man—just a Spaniard in love. For the first time in the history of the island, a man was forbidden to enter a neighbor's house.

"When the Wanderer had been gone a year, a little fair-haired girl came to Arda. She was named Virginia. Oh! in those few months they were happy. The baby was different from any that had come to the island. It drew the wonderful American nearer, made the little stone hut brighter, and life more worth the living.

"Jimmy was a fisher, but in the two years following the departure of the Wanderer he had done more than supply the tables of his foster countrymen. He had built many little sloops for deep-sea fishing; he had spun great nets and cast-lines of pineapple and cocoa fibre; he worked the mine below the floor of the church and filled the houses of the people with queer trinkets of solid gold. A diamond which Matavi gave him, he worked into a setting of gold for Arda, tracing her new initials inside the band.

"When Virginia was two years old, Arda was required by custom, to do her share of her husband's work. When he had shoaled a large school of blue-backs within the bar, Arda would go out in her own sloop and help to net them. And often when Jimmy had other work to do ashore, Arda went out beyond the bar alone."

The boy fell silent for a minute. He sipped at his wine slowly, then hid both his hands below the table. When he spoke again, his lips were trembling. The captain did not heed the whistling of the launch at the landing below the plaza.

"One morning Jimmy started early for the church. Arda left the baby with a neighbor, and going down the beach, floated the deep-sea sloop which Jimmy had made for his own use. She brought down a breaker of water and her dinner, and then, when the tide was high, she pushed away from the shore and tacked out over the bar among the swells beyond.

"From his shack on the side of the hill, Alvaric was watching these proceedings anxiously.

"There was a brisk wind blowing off the island and the sky threatened a storm before night. When Arda reached the fishing grounds, about four miles off shore, she cast her lines, dropped her drag anchor over the side, and settled back to read one of the books Jimmy had smuggled from the Wanderer. Long before noon, a gale was blowing. Arda drew in her lines and headed the wind, for the cove entrance. The sail bellied out gaily in the breeze, and had the island been in the other direction, she would have made it in an hour.

"She had not gone far when it happened. The stay of the mainsail snapped at the gaff, the boom whirled inboard, breaking the lash at the topmast, and both the main and jib sheets fluttered noisily over the board. She carried no topsail, and if she had, she could not have mastered it. She swung the oars into place and strained her back in a last endeavor to change her course. With the first pull, the port oar snapped like a pencil, leaving only a useless club in her hands. In consternation, she looked closely at the remaining oar, and as she looked, her blood ran cold. Perhaps for the first time in her life, she was afraid. The piece had been neatly sawed just below the balance. One stroke and it would break.

"The wind was carrying her away from the island at seven knots and the gale was growing fiercer every minute. The little boat was riding the swells well, but it was not the storm that she feared. It was what must come after—the long days when she would drift alone and helpless ever farther away from Jimmy and her baby. No words of mine can make you understand the agony of the next two days. The storm lasted only through the first night, but the wind blew steadily, and her little craft sped on into the unknown, like a clipped gull before a storm. She had not slept, and the terrible loneliness was driving her mad. She raved at the bare mast, ogled the triangles of the sharks that followed her and laughed herself to sleep.

"When she awoke she was in a musty cabin of a ship that sailed like the Wanderer. There were bearded men standing over her, and she felt hot brandy in her throat. When she was able to talk, the story she told, or tried to tell, convinced the men that she was crazy, and so they treated her tenderly. They were Spaniards, from the port of Ferrol, bound for here, Montevideo. For what seemed years, she lay there in the cabin. Visions of Jimmy and Virginia came to haunt her, and she tossed and raved like a mad woman.

"Then, after many days, the ship lay still beside a dock. Staring through a port she saw strange sights—things she had never seen before. She saw more men than she had dreamed were in the world. They were running to and fro, carrying things on little carts. The big wooden buildings frightened her, and the smoky air and noise set her to raving. Then she turned, and looking out over the sea, she became quiet again. At evening, she removed her outlandish dress and put on a suit of dark clothes, which hung in her cabin. Then, before the standing lights were lit, she walked down the gang plank. She wandered aimlessly through the streets, hungering for the sight of a familiar thing. Tired in body and soul, she turned instinctively toward the water front. She missed the docks and brought up against a vine-covered wall. Following this in the darkness, she came—she saw—oh, can't you see?"

The little hands came up from under the table and trembled over the big hand of the captain. The head bowed forward on the table, and the sou'wester tipped and fell to the ground. A great mass of silken hair tumbled out upon the table. The slim white shoulders shook with silent sobs.

Slowly the old captain reached out and touched the strands of night-hued silk. His hand slipper lower to the girl's left hand and fumbled with the ring which glistened there. She raised great tender eyes to him pleadingly.

"Come," he said tenderly, pointing down to the docks, where a launch was still tooting its whistle. "Come, we sail at dawn."

The girl drew back, and her eyes were saucersful of tears. I bowed down and touched her hand.

"Trust him," I said. "This is Captain Kerry of the Arizona. He wants Jimmy, too!"

THE DESERT'S DRINK

By FRANK LOFTUS

T WAS midsummer and West Texas. I repeat, for the sake of force and emphasis, that it was midsummer and West Texas. New York or Chicago would not do so well to convey the idea of locality, and the trite phrase, "Hot as Hades," shrinks in adjectival comparison with "midsummer and West Texas." In the aforesaid cities, the asphalt streets were as soggy as dough, and hot tar oozed out from between brick paving. Little lives were snuffed out, suffocated by the sultry heat. In the subway crowds, hundreds of women fainted; down town, people dropped dead. All this with the mercury standing below a hundred. But in West Texas, it was 118 in the shade—and there was no shade.

The blinding glare of the alkali plain stretched on in the afternoon sun. Here and there, a cactus plant lifted its uncanny bulk and taunted the parched traveller with its lush gray greenness. Their startling variety of clumsiness was all that broke the dismal monotony of the scorching desert. And yet, the lizards and scorpions basking lazily with unblinking eyes in the torturing sun, had long since heard the hoofbeats, but not until the lone rider appeared did they scamper away.

"God! this is the devil's own country—no, the devil would not have it as a gift, not enough water even for him." The rider removed his hat and brushed his shirtsleeves across his blurred and weary eyes, stinging from the dust particles and smarting red from the glare of the white desert with its writhing heat waves. His throat throbbed with thirst, and choking as the dust seared his throat, he raised his water bottle and drained it to the last drop. He leaned forward on his horse. "This is the trail, though—left hind shoe missing. Get on," his harsh voice rasped as the horse stumbled. And then on he rode, following the faint trail across what seemed to him to be miles of interminable desert.

The setting sun found the lone rider dizzily reeling in his saddle. Suddenly, a dark speck in the distance caused him to straighten in his saddle and shade his eyes with his hand.

"Must be that well they told me I'd find," he muttered weakly, urging his tired horse to greater effort. Loosing his hold on the reins, he tightly held to the saddle horn to steady his swaying, and gouged the horse with his spurs to keep him going. When they were near the dark spot he emitted a hoarse whisper of despair. The dark spot was nothing but the dead carcass of a horse, but seeing a canteen strap, the weakened rider, slowly, painfully, dismounted. He walked a few steps, stooped, then fell in a heap. The canteen was crushed beneath the carcass of the horse. And yet, but a quarter of a mile farther was the water he was seeking. And lying beside the water-hole, hand shaded over eyes which anxiously scanned the plain, was the man whom the lone rider had trailed over half a country.

"Hit's him," Lem Watson remarked to himself, "and I expect he's got stroked pretty bad. He'll stay there a long time." Then Watson remembered the horrible tales of suffering anguish ex-

perienced by men who had nearly died in the desert; some of them had lost their minds, while others had come through all right, but had left a blanket-mate or partner to pay toll for the lack of water. Having thought of all these things, it was the better side of Lem Watson's nature that prompted him to decide to go to the aid of the fallen man. "I'll relieve him of his gun and then bring him to with this whiskey. I'll need his horse, though, to get away on. I can show him the way to this water-hole, and then he can wait until some-one comes along this trail. By that time, I'll be well on my way to Mexico." Lem Watson thought these things and mur-mured them half aloud to himself. Then he started toward the prostrate figure.

When his rider pitched forward on the ground and lay there still, the horse looked at him for several minutes and then walked slowly over to investigate, nosing the silent figure. The wet nose and tongue were enough to rouse Shaw —the man who had fallen, but had not entirely fainted away. He started to rise, but saw a figure rise up off the ground a quarter of a mile away. In his weakened condition, he foresaw that he would not be able to do much, for he recognized the figure by now, as the man he had been trailing. "Same height, same stoop, same limp," he muttered to himself. But with the hand on the side furthermost from the approaching man, he slowly, carefully, slid out a small derringer and a pair of handcuffs and let them rest under his coat near that hand. His larger revolver was on the opposite side and he could not remove it without being seen by Watson. Then he closed his eyes and simulated un-consciousness.

Watson slowly approached with his gun in hand, covering the unconscious man. Bending over him he carefully lifted Shaw's gun out of its scabbard and put it in his own pocket. Satisfied then, that the man was unconscious he drew out a whiskey flask and laid his own gun on the sand. Then, seeming to think of his get-away, he ran out and caught the horse, bringing him in close and tying him, Texas fashion, which is not tying him at all, but leaving the bridle reins hanging over his head to the ground. In this way, a Texas pony will stand for hours just as securely as if he were tied to a *bois d'arc* post or a mesquite tree. Through long eyelashes, Shaw saw all this, but closed his eyes when Watson approached him, and gripped the hand-cuffs tighter. Watson raised the head of the seemingly unconscious man with one hand, while with the other he put the whiskey flask to his lips and poured the hot stuff down his throat. This posi-tion put Watson's wrists within three or four inches of each other—all that Shaw wanted. With a quick, sliding motion, he had fastened the handcuffs on the wrist that was near his throat and had forced it over until the other half of the steel bracelet had snapped over the other wrist. So quickly was it done, that Watson had not even time to think. Then he ripped out a few curses and growled:

"That's a hell of a nice trick to play on a fellow that was tryin' to do you a favor, ain't it?"

"Never mind, my friend. I had my duty to perform and I cannot stop to consider the trivial act you were doing for me."

"Trivial! If I hadn't come along, you'd have died here, that's what. Your bones would 'a' rotted. If you had any sense you'd have knowed better than to come into this country here with such a small hat. Tryin' to save you from sufferin' damnation, and then you nab me like that!" Watson's words were burning with resentment.

"That will do for that," returned Shaw. "I have to take you back to Chicago and it makes no difference to me whether I found you here or in the desert of Sahara. If I got the right

idea, there is a watering-place over there where you came from, and we'll go over there and camp for the night. Then we'll go on to Las Pinto by this trail. They say it is not far."

When they had eaten supper by the water-hole, they lay down on the broad, warm prairie with the turquoise sky studded with diamonds for a cover. Out in the quiet places with the stars shining so brightly from the Southern sky—much brighter than they seem to shine anywhere else—and nothing around you but a broad, swelling stretch of land, the world seems mighty large, and you seem very lonesome. It was probably due to this feeling and partly to the cigarettes which Shaw allowed him to have in compliance with his request, that Watson started talking.

"Say, do you think I'm sorry I killed that brute? Why, I'd do the same thing over again. When that Northern fellow, Williams—a sort of artist he was—came down to our place, we naturally treated him with all the hospitality we could. We did everyone that-a-way. We had a mighty fine place, there." The speaker paused and took an extra inhale of the cigarette. "Williams commenced lovin' my sister. She was warm-blooded—a beautiful girl." Again Watson stopped and looked afar off, and then at the bright evening star which seemed like a small moon itself, and very close. Shaw, lying out there where the world seems very large, also thought. We will not drag in the privacy of Shaw's thoughts, but as Watson went on, one of the things in his mind was to unlock the steel bracelet that bound his wrist to Watson's—but he did not.

"When she died," continued Watson, "the shock also killed my father. I swore over her grave that I would kill Williams if I had to go to the ends of the earth. I'd do the same thing over again. Any man would."

The next morning, Shaw unlocked the handcuffs and let Watson get the breakfast, keeping him well covered all the while. Then they travelled on. Watson sometimes travelled on foot and at others, doubled up on the horse with Shaw. They stopped at noon and Watson again got the meal ready, but this time they had to drink the water they had brought along, for there was no water-hole near. No sooner had they started again, after dinner, than the horse, which had been weakened during the latter part of the journey, stumbled in a small hole and fell. Shaw escaped unhurt, but the canteens of water were both crushed. Upon investigation it was found that the horse's leg was broken, and at Watson's suggestion, he was shot.

The pulsing heat waves rose unmercifully as two figures ploughed with plunging steps through the alkali. In a cracked, parched voice, Shaw spoke.

"Las Pinto can't be more'n eight miles." His voice ended in a wheeze.

The other man was straining his eyes through inflamed eyelids. He had seen a spot that differed from the usual heat-spots, because it kept its place on the ground and did not dance off into the air before his tired eyes. He pointed it out to the other man.

"It's off the trail," he said, "but if you want to—"

"For God's sake, yes. Give me water."

Then, as he noticed that there was not a sign of a beaten trail, as there would have been if it had been a regular watering-place, Watson thought he understood. And every toiling, torturing, tediously hurrying minute, deepened his conviction. He had heard of and read about those places in the desert plains. The Indians had used them. When they neared the water, Watson ran forward, peered down into it, and then as he noticed several crawfish and tadpoles swimming, he appeared satisfied and scooped up a hatful of it. It was green and of an unpleasant odor, but he carried it over to Shaw. Then he hesitated and spoke huskily:

"I can't do it. If I had wanted to kill you, I would have left you lying where I first saw you. This water has arsenic in it. You know what that means." Across the mind of Shaw there stood out a vivid picture which was painted on a calendar hanging in his office. Two prospectors had become lost in the desert, one of them becoming crazed for water. Finally, they lurched, swaying dizzily down into a pocket, only to find at the end some bleached bones around the pool. One had enough sense left to realize that it was arsenic, and by fighting, half-killing his crazed companion, he managed to drag him away. Below the picture was a description of it. "I had this in mind when I brought you over here," continued Watson. "But instead of giving it to you so as to get away from you, I'll escape you by taking it myself."

Uttering a hoarse, horrified shriek, Shaw sprang forward, but too late. Watson had taken two swallows of the stuff before Shaw knocked it out of his hand.

"Good-bye, Sheriff. I wouldn't let you take me back because they wouldn't understand." The speaker's voice trailed away and then he lay still. His eyes closed, his face bulged, and his lips were blue. Shaw shook him, but, seeing how useless it was, left the dead man and staggered to his feet.

SEATED in his office in Chicago with his friend, Doctor Malloy, whose office was next door, Shaw pointed to the picture of the two prospectors by the arsenic pool of water and told the story.

"Did you say that water was green in color?" asked Doctor Malloy when he had finished. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he directed Shaw to come into his office. There he took down the first volume of a row of books labelled: "Medico-Analytic Encyclopedia." Turning the pages, he stopped, and traced with his finger. "Here it is," he said, and Shaw followed his tracing:

"'ARSENIC:—One of the chemical elements, a mineral poison, a soft gray-colored metal. It is found in South America, Australia, and in some places in the Arizona desert of the United States. An erroneous opinion exists to the effect that some is found in Western Texas, but the only known pools in Western United States are in Arizona. The mineral found in Western Texas closely resembles arsenic. (See "Aponeum.") Arsenic is a fatal poison. See Appendix for antidote.'"

Shaw eagerly seized the volume from Malloy's hands, and turned back a few pages. "A-p; a-p-l; a-p-m; here we are.

"'APONEUM:—A mineral of green color, closely resembling arsenic, but not as poisonous or deadly. A small amount only produces a swelling of the veins, and a stupor resembling death, slowing the heart action considerably, but passing off in a few hours. Found only in Western Texas and New Mexico of the United States. Has not been used to any advantage in the medical profession.'"

Shaw closed the book with a bang. "Well, I'll be—say, do you suppose that fool knew that?' he asked. "I wonder—"

While there may be, here and there, a vague doubt that *The Tribune* is the world's greatest newspaper, there is no questioning the claim of the Wilmington *News* that it is "Delaware's Greatest and Only Morning Newspaper."—*Chicago Tribune.*

The German mark is now barely visible.—*Minneapolis Journal.*

THE MORNING ONLY GIRL

By LEO NOBLE BURNETT

NE morning she was whistling, ever so lightly, the chorus of a merry ragtime, popular two seasons ago, with her lips screwed up devilishly, her eyes sparkling merrily.

Oliver McNabb hadn't noticed her the first morning—nor the second. On the third morning, however, a bulging spring morning, a glimpse of her black eyes and spatter of freckles as she brushed by had caused him to single her out.

Her lacy white waist, picked up for fifty-nine cents somewhere, but which he regarded as a creation of real niftiness; her patent-leather shoes, criminally out of style, but which appealed to him as pert; and her independent nose, not snobbish, but just properly independent—these were all noticed in their turn.

McNabb was from the country, but more than two years in the city's howling mart had given him no little urbane ease and perspicacity. He was twenty-five and intended to make something of himself. He was employed in a pipe-organ factory.

To whatever heights Oliver's tendrils of aspiration may have climbed, he had to punch the time-clock at the shop entrance not later than seven-thirty every morning except Sunday. On his way to work he passed daily through the square in front of the city hall. To arrive at the factory on time, he had learned from experience that it was necessary to leave the park by seven.

At this hour many were hurrying to their various places of employment. Suddenly the girl had floated into the stream. Others of her sex who rushed by at this hour tended to be bent and hardened. Her wholesome freshness stood out; and her appearance in the same place every morning naturally impressed an impressionable young man.

She walked rapidly and looked straight ahead. But young McNabb, there is no use denying, was more debonair than the others. Youth is susceptible and the girl was not old. Thus, at the end of a few weeks, she nodded slightly when he raised his hat. No harm in that, surely.

Sometimes one would be a trifle late and their paths would cross at one side of the park or the other. Usually, however the first heavy thud of seven would sound from the city hall clock when they passed the ornate fountain which marked the very center of the square. Both recognized that to meet at this exact spot was a mark of punctiliousness. Once, when McNabb was almost out of the park (and he walked slowly fearing she might not come at all), he met her almost running at the edge of the square farthest from her destination. He supplemented the raising of his hat with a remark:

"Late to-day, arn't you?"

She laughed genially. "You just wait. I'll make up for it to-morrow," were the words he caught.

So, on the next morning, he delayed purposely and let her meet him just as he entered the square.

She raised a finger in good-natured reproval. "There, didn't I tell you?" she chided him.

It was easy after that. Now and then he would add a scrap to his knowledge of her. She said her name was Sara—Sara Hatch. Yes, from the country, and

proud of it. Where did she work? Oh, very well, if he had to know—in a laundry office. Helped to keep books and took in packages of dirty clothes. Assured this man that he could have his shirts by to-night and that woman that her—her—laundry would be ready by to-morrow. She refused to give her address.

He didn't press her. They accepted it as an early morning acquaintanceship, It was different and refreshing. They both caught the humor and peculiar romance of it.

But this relation, this friendship, was like all others in that such things are never stationary. Sunny, harmless amities have to be poked ahead continually by the relentless God of Perpetual Change.

Oliver took on a striped bow tie. There were many things which crept into his toilette that might have been omitted without sacrificing respectability.

Gradually, quietly, this seventh hour caprice, which the sophisticated Oliver regarded lightly at first, came to be a thing of his life. He actually found himself looking forward from one morning to the next. He believed that the big things in life are gained by taking chances; so he gambled one morning when they met at the fountain.

"Would you come a few minutes earlier to-morrow?"

She came!

It was a summer morning of splashing brightness. They sat on a green bench close to the walk opposite the fountain. They had never sat together before. It thrust them into a different relationship. They became aware that they were sitting here in the park, chatting commonplaces at a ridiculously early hour, for the sole and obvious purpose of enjoying the company of each other.

Sara was no blusher, but she found herself fighting a blush. And the blush won by big odds. McNabb didn't notice, however; his own nervous ecstasy demanded too much attention. If he had held her panting in his arms on a palmed balcony by moonlight, he could not have experienced a wilder delight than he did experience in this boundless license of having her here on the same green seat with him—unperfumed freshness—black, black hair—a girl—

The clock boomed the first stroke of seven. "Pshaw!"

They hurried away.

It was more natural the next morning. The naturalness increased. It became a happy little creed. The fountain was the shrine, seven the hour. He tried to wring from her permission to see her at night. Dance? No? She liked shows didn't she?

Her eagerness was obvious, but her refusal was uncompromising. A morning affair, she decreed. He complied graciously. Sometimes they had but a few seconds together, sometimes a few minutes, occasionally a quarter of an hour—never longer than that.

It was past seven when they broke away on a few mornings, making them both late. Perhaps that was the reason. Perhaps it was the fiendish ogre, Hard Times, which laughed an impish laugh into the laundry and pipe-organ businesses. Whatever it was, Oliver McNabb suddenly found his job hanging on a thread. The thread didn't hold. All in a day he was whisked from Employed to Unemplayed.

Sara Hatch was a good office girl. She was as successful as anyone the laundry ever had in convincing a flustered gentleman who wore size 16 collars that he could easily adapt his neck to the 14½ size which came in his package. Nevertheless, in the latter part of the summer, the laundry management saw fit to reduce its office force. Sara had to go!

That night she dropped a tear or two over a plate of sallow cornbeef hash in a hopeless restaurant where even the flies had a discouraged way about them.

The girl's tragedy occurred a week fol-

lowing Oliver's. During that week he had continued to make his morning trips at the usual time without apprising Sara of his discharge. He assumed that another job would be available immediately. At the end of a week, however, the gravity of the situation dawned upon him.

They were both duly serious when they met at the fountain at ten minutes to seven. Both had been job-hunting.

"Are all of those people out of jobs?" she asked, indicating the prostrate forms of wretches scattered about beneath the park's maples. Some had slept there all night and presented weird contortions. Others lay flat with arms outstretched like the groaning wounded of a battlefield. Some were getting up lamely and crawling away to suffer the heat of August in another place.

"All out of jobs," he assured her.

McNabb had one hand in a coat pocket and twisted his finger about a newspaper clipping which called for a "strong, bright, earnest, willing, able-bodied young man with good habits, who can play a trombone, to work in a paint shop." He could coax a few notes from a harmonica, but was sure that a trombone was beyond him.

Sara fussed with her handbag which contained a want ad clipping, asking for a woman with a thirty-eight bust measure to act as a demonstrator. Sara was but a thirty-six. No, it could never be done.

The clock struck seven.

She must hurry, she said. Mr. Gruensfelder couldn't stand it to have his employes late. Discharged a girl in the mangling department yesterday for that very thing. Lovely man to work for, but such a temper sometimes!

He must hurry too. "Mr. Himmelblau—"

But she was away.

She went two blocks beyond the park and circled back to her rooming place. She lay flat on her back on the sagging cot and heard Mrs. Riley yell across the alley to a neighbor, that she was going to have cabbage for dinner.

Oliver also detoured. He bought a newspaper and sat on the front porch of his rooming house studying it until the Old Lady came out to scrub and drove him away. It was just the incentive he needed.

WANTED—Men to fill thousands of easy jobs. $85 to $250 a month for the right parties.

A correspondence school.

WANTED—Active young man with good appearance for selling. Must be a hustler. A. NO. 1 line.

Gas irons.

WANTED—Men to learn the barber's trade. The world needs more barbers.

It offered no immediate remuneration. Anyway, it didn't appeal.

WANTED—Bright young man as a breadwagon driver. Must speak three languages.

He passed this one up at the start. He tried them all, day after day. But there were six columns of "SITUATIONS WANTED," and a scraggly half-column of "HELP WANTED—MALE." There was a waiting list in the few cases where he might qualify.

"Name and address, please. You'll be notified when your turn comes. Oh, yes, pretty long list." With that, an officious secretary would call the interview to a peremptory conclusion.

Sara's experiences were similar. It was interesting to read that an aigrette had been lost between Wabash and Sixteenth on the evening of the twenty-first; and that a graduate masseuse in Swedish massage and medical gymnastics desired a position, but it did not help her.

And she needed help!

If she had only been black, or Japanese, or a lady chauffeur, or a middle-aged widow, or a manicurist and chiropodist with a following! According

to the want ads her services would have been in immediate demand if she but had any of these qualifications.

Morning after morning, the girl appeared in the park, her handbag stuffed with clippings.

Morning after morning, Oliver met her there, want ads in every pocket.

Sara was not naturally deceptive, but she wanted McNabb to think she was getting on. She told him that she had been promoted to head girl at the office. A day or two later, Oliver, not wishing to be excelled, announced that the company had taken him in from the shop and given him a desk in the sales office.

Sara's skirt (and she had but one) was growing shiny. Her straw hat was becoming dreadfully unseasonable. Continued washings had revealed that her fifty-nine cent waist was a fifty-nine cent waist. Nor were Oliver's trousers in the best possible state of preservation.

It was the last of August. It was the middle of September. It was the latter part of September. The days grew alarmingly short. People hurried more than ever. The stores were showing overcoats and furs. Thanksgiving was suggested and Christmas was intimated. Every day the family of the unemployed took in more members.

Now and then, Oliver and the girl would get a job for a day or two, but when October stared from the calendar, Oliver's savings had dwindled down to a few dollars and Sara could pay room rent for but one week more. The city which had thrilled her, sickened and frightened her as the mercury went down. Oliver had a thought or two of the country himself. As a last resort he could go back.

It was a morning of penetrating chill, one of those fall mornings on which rain would have been colder than snow. A wind caught up some dry leaves from the dull brown lawn of the park and scraped them across the cement walk, where some stuck in a rift at the edge of the fountain. People scurried along with their heads bent. Few wore overcoats. They looked worried. They were worried. McNabb came five minutes early. He half intended to confess this morning that he had been coming at seven all of this time just for her. He knew that she would admire him for it. He wondered just how she would express her sentiments when she learned that he had been making sacrifices all along. He would tell her he was going away—to the country—that he would remember her—that sometime perhaps—

It struck seven. The last quaver of the seventh stroke evaporated. Where was Sara? Had *she* lost her position?

Then, far down the walk, he saw her coming. As she came nearer it seemed, somehow, that she was changed. He hadn't noticed it so much until now. He recalled how she looked those spring mornings. To-day she was stooped or smaller, or something. Poor girl! She ought not to work in a laundry. The morning was so gray and he was so huddled that she didn't notice him at first.

She smiled when she saw him. "Oh, you waited! I was so late I thought perhaps you went on. I hope I haven't made you late." She glanced up at the clock. "It's lots after seven, isn't it? If you don't mind, I'll hurry right along. You had better hustle, too. I do hope I haven't made you late at the factory."

Her departing smile had a seriousness about it which he was able to appreciate—two hours later.

He walked to the river front. Two large pleasure crafts stood deserted at the dock. The water lapped cold and hard about the piers. He took some worn clippings from his pocket. Here was a place he would like to fill, although he couldn't answer all of the requirements; but he had tried everything else, absolutely everything. He would take a chance and get turned down again.

A two-mile walk brought him to a pleasant modern residence. He rang the

bell. It was answered by an oldish lady. Did someone at this address advertise for help?

The woman assured him he was at the right place. She admitted him to the hall. "Wait here a moment," she directed. "My husband is busy with someone just now, but he will see you presently." She left him sitting on the hall seat. "A young man waiting to see you, Will," he heard her say as she passed through the next room.

The door opening into the front room from the hallway was ajar. There were two voices—a man's and a girl's.

Man: "No, it isn't large, but you could never manage. And it would be lonesome for you. I wouldn't feel right if I let you have it."

Girl: "But I am very willing, sir. I love that kind of work and have always done it. I know I could manage as well as a man."

Oliver thought he recognized the tones. His eyes wide with partial understanding, he leaned forward to catch every syllable.

Masculine Voice's negative to the girl's plea was firm.

The door opened.

"Sara!"

She uttered a little scream. "And you, too—"

They both saw that politeness should precede dramatics. McNabb told her to wait for him outside. She assented.

McNabb went into the front room with the man. When he came out he was smiling.

"I believe you can manage, Mr. McNabb," said the man. "If you will return to-morrow—er—at this same time, let us say, we can arrange the details. It's a fine place and I think you will like it. I was sorry for your young friend, but it would have been a great deal too much for the child. Good morning, Mr. McNabb."

She was waiting at the foot of the porch steps. They said nothing until they passed the hedge and were in the street.

Sara held her handkerchief to her face. "I didn't mean anything wrong when I lied that way every morning," she managed to say. "But you were the only friend I had, and I did so hate to lose you. It was all a lie, the promotion and everything. I—I have not had a job for seven weeks!" She removed her handkerchief. Her eyes and nose were a bit red.

"But I lied, too," he was saying. "I haven't had a job either; and I wanted to see you. All of the time I kept thinking I would get another place. I thought—well, let's forget that now because now I have a place. I just got one—back there."

She looked in amazement.

"You—got—that—place? You mean you are—" Her eyes grew bright and angry and dry. "That spoils it so. You weren't fair with me or with *her!*"

He laughed. "Listen. You don't understand. I *lied* to that man. I am not what you think I am—not yet. But I hope to be. And Miss—Miss—Sara, it's all up to you."

Anger surrendered to confusion. Understanding came a-creeping.

Somewhere, faintly but clearly, a clock was striking.

"It's sev—it's nine o'clock," he said. "Before it stops striking you must say that I can make good the lie I told to get this job, this wonderful job."

Five—six—seven—

Sara's unblushable face was furious with blushing. Her independent nose was funny, it was so pink from crying.

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Nine," concluded the clock.

He took her arm as they walked along and held her as close as propriety permitted; in fact, he strained propriety a bit.

From his pocket he took the worn clipping. They read it together:

WANTED—Young married couple to care for house and small farm in suburb.

THE BACKSLIDING OF BAD-EYE

By WELLINGTON VANDIVER

OTHING was wrong with his optics; his eyes were as good as yours. The Police Docket gave his name as "Bad-Eye." An admiring negro constituency referred to him, in his absence, as "Unc' Bad-Eye." In the days of his childhood, his mother might have called him "Sweetie" or Lazarus, Opodeldoc, Epaminondas or William, but at the present writing, the negro, boss of the colored population of the city, was known as "Bad-Eye" Johnson; probably on account of the baleful gleams from a pair of yellowish black optics.

Bad-Eye Johnson had successfully curbed the ambitious efforts of a visiting representative of Atlanta's toughest Darktown District to get into the ballroom at Hominy Hall without paying, and the order had been given by him to the orchestra to resume playing. A well-seasoned pick handle had been the chief argument used in the discussion with the ebullient gent from the Gate City. Tucking this handy implement gracefully under his left arm, Unc' Bad-Eye advanced to the centre of the floor, and announced to the assembled group of cocaine-snuffers, blind tiger operators, cooks, nurses, porch climbers and Ethiopion Society, that the music could "continue on."

It was worth the price of admission, any time, to observe Bad-Eye regulating manners, as well as morals, in that dancing joint. Undoubtedly he was the high, low and middle Justice of Niggerdom, the absolute autocrat of the Darkey Underworld in the city. About the size of an ordinary wood shed, nearly seven feet high, muscles equal to a Texas steer, black, imperious, dominating, with a razor up his sleeve, the ever present pick handle in his brawny fist, Bad-Eye wielded far more influence than the Deity in the Shades of Darkeydom.

The colored crooks paid tribute to him from every dive in the city. His barber shop was headquarters for the swell mob; his Cat-fish Restyraw fed the coon with the suddenly annexed "long green." The continuous crap game at the rear of his shop yielded him a rake-off of comfortable proportions; the Hominy Hall Dance Parlors itself, was no small source of revenue, with its blind tiger and skin-game attachments, the soda pop bar masking the stronger liquids.

To Bad-Eye, standing near the centre of the floor, with his legs wide apart, like the Colossus of Rhodes, came a coon with the complexion of coal-dust, whose garments resembled an Aurora Borealis. In his tie was a phoney diamond, the size of a stopper to an ordinary vinegar cruet, south of which was a watch-chain big enough to hold an ox.

Confidentially this colored Christmas Tree remarked to Bad-Eye: "Cap! I is de boss screech from Birmin'ham in de sport line. Does you know where a gen-'leman could git a lil' game wid de bones, or de kyards?"

Warily Bad-Eye surveyed the hectic garments—the Solomon-in-all-his-glory raiments of the questioner, before he deigned an answer: "Nigger Detective from Birmin'ham drapped in here last Fall—huntin' er game. He found one. Shortly after that time de Birmin'ham sport quit detectin'. Folks toted him out

in a black pine box, walkin' slow. De detectin' business ain't healthy for a nigger."

"Cap, you does me wrong," remonstrated the "Screech." "I'm all right; de perlice run me out'n Birmin'ham, suspicioned of kyards and craps. I can prove up my karacter by two or three ladies and gemmen on dis floor. I ain't no more a detective den I is a hant."

The sincerity of his tones, together with his offer of local proof, convinced Bad-Eye that the citizen from Birmingham was a card sharp as represented.

"Please retire wid me to de adj'inin' room," remarked Bad-Eye, with his grandest manner, "and maybe we kin find a gen'leman in dere what will drap a nickel in de slot, and let you see it rain."

A den of box-car size, reeking with the smoke of cheap cherrots, where the air was so thick with the scent of perspiring stable sports and mean whiskey that saddle bags could be successfully hung on it, proved to be the "adj'inin' room." Around a thick blanket spread on the floor, a huge ring of intent gamblers knelt, or sprawled, while one of the number, with monkey-like activities, whirled his closed hands before scattering the dice upon the blanket, fervently ejaculating just previous to each throw.

"Woof!" sputtered the Birmingham sport, "dis shorely does remind me of home. Dis is Birmin'ham, all right, all right. Lemme in on dem festivities. I fades you-all for a dollar."

"Huh," observed the Birmingham darkey, when his money disappeared on the next throw into the pocket of the operator of the bones. "Dat dollar didn't last no longer dan a Junebug at a Peckerwood meetin'."

But in a little while the gambler from Birmingham secured the dice, and from that time on, he won about every other throw. Slowly player after player ceased betting as his pile was won. After thirty minutes of rapid play, the gambler from the city grew triumphant, chaffing the others of each throw: "I told you dat you country niggers didn't know nothin' 'bout shootin' craps. You ought to practice moonlight nights and of Sundays. It takes brains to play dis here game." Just as he was closing the act of making a throw with the dice, Bad-Eye Johnson, who was standing immediately behind the Birmingham sport, with a pitcher of water and a tumbler in his hand, dropped both to the floor with a crash, shivering them into many fragments. Like a flash, the Birmingham negro turned his head. In that brief instant, with a motion quicker than the striking of a rattlesnake, Slick Amos, the player sitting next to "Birmingham," seized the dice with which the play had been made, substituted his own cubes instead, and dropped back into his former attitude. Bad-Eye grumbled an apology for his own awkwardness, after which the game proceeded, but with vastly different results. Steadily the sport from the Magic City lost to the accompaniment of the gibes of the "country niggers." No expedient seemed to change the "luck." Turning his coat wrong side outward, rubbing a fragment of lodestone on the dice, walking around a chair, rubbing his hands with a rabbit's foot, producing a "Conjuror's bag" containing a scrap of red flannel, a frog leg tied with three white hairs, proved of no avail, as "Birmingham" lost without interruption until he announced himself as "cleaned out."

"Looks like there ain't any way for a church membah to make a honest livin' out'n you low-down niggers no way you kin fix it," he said as he quit in disgust.

Slick Amos, cashier, lieutenant, as well as faithful understudy of Unc' Bad-Eye, reporting to his principal the receipts of the evening, handed over a roll of greenbacks big enough to choke a cow, at a late hour, commenting at the same time on the episode of the Birmin'ham nigger.

"Dat sport," said he, "'worked hosses' on us for a lil' while, until you broke dat pitcher and gimme a chance to nab dem bones, and from dat time on I faded him wid dese here hosses to a fare-you-well," exhibiting a pair of loaded dice.

"Dat's right son," nodded Unc' Bad-Eye approvingly, at the same time skinning a ten dollar bill off the roll, which he handed to Slick Amos. "Don't never let no Birmin'ham tinhorn sport saw off any funny biz on dis lay-out. De bible was plum right when is say dat de 'sinnah digs a pit for another nigger, and falls in it hisself.'" Honesty is de best policy if it do sometimes make a man damn poor.

"How is dat 'tracted meetin' gettin' erlong? Dey tells me you is a regular mourner."

The congregation of Mount Canaan Church—called "Mount" Canaan because it was situated hopelessly low in the middle of an overflowed flat, with no Mount within miles of it—had concluded that their own pastor lacked "pep," which defect it was proposed to remedy by sending for a colored evangelist to conduct a tent meeting. The divine had arrived; the meeting was at white heat. The visiting preacher had proved to be torrid, flaming, hectic, to the last degree. His perfervid discourses on Hell and Damnation, caused the sinners to flock to the altar, night after night, in windrows, and by multitudes.

Under the influence of the excitement, everybody had loosened up, filling the collection hats to overflowing each night. The flamboyant preacher had lost no opportunity of denouncing Unc' Bad-Eye as head devil of various nefarious pitfalls, so that the question propounded to Slick Amos had a tinge of reproachfulness in it—a subtle inference that the chances might be that Slick Amos would abandon Unc' Bad-Eye's commercial joints in order to be gathered into the fold.

The reply of that individual was something unusual. Slowly winking his left eye, and putting his open hand up against a tremendous, cavernous mouth, Slick Amos replied: "Schish! Hush! Dem Mount Canaan niggers has done got five hundred dollars in der treasury from de collections. Dey shore got de boodle. Dat congregation is needin' a treasurer. Of coas I is er mourner; I is also er candidate for dat treasurer. See?"

"Uh! Huh! Dat's de way de cat is jumpin', is it," mused the boss. Then after a few minutes' deep thought, "Son, yo' ain't de man for dat job. As a skin game artist you is a pippin, but in high fy-nancial sur-kles you would crap out. Just keep on mournin' for a week or so, but don't you 'come through.' Let de bretherin' and sisterin' sing and pray over you scandalous, but leave de commercial operations to your Unc' Johnson. Three days from now you can report to de meetin' dat old Bad-Eye Johnson is stricken wid de burden of his sins, and is sorter seekin'."

For days after this conversation, the colored sporting element of the city stood aghast at the influence of the tent meeting on their chief. At late hours of the night, his deep bass voice filled the neighborhood with the dismal strains of that ancient religious drige, "Hark from the Tombs a Doleful Sound." During the day he led the barber-shop discussions with scriptural themes. His lectures thereon, while not precisely accurate, always were delivered with emphasis, coupled with a defiance to any one who dared differ with him. He was especially luminous in his analysis of "Simpson doin' up dem thousand Philadelphians wid de jaw-bone." And his picture of "De 'Postle Paul pintin' his pistol at dem Phesians," proved to be a heroic epic, very popular with his audience.

His attendance at the tent meeting began with a quiet, unobtrusive occupancy of the rear bench, next to the door; from which point he gradually worked his way to one of the seats near the pulpit.

From this conspicuous position, Bad-Eye punctuated the discourse of the torrid evangelist with ready groans, ejaculations, Amens; at proper sections of the sermon, acting as an individual chorus to the "brother's" eloquence. With stately, slow steps, he marched from the tent meeting back to his barber shop, carrying a copy of Gospel Hymns in one hand, and a religious looking book under his arm, which was bound like an Oxford Bible, but which proved on closer inspection to be a "Handy Dictionary." As near as possible, Bad-Eye put up a first-class imitation of a "Godly walk and conversation," at all times endeavoring to twist his fierce features into a smug, meek penitent advertisement of the supposedly pious thoughts within. At times, when not within the ken of any of the "flock," his hair-trigger temper got the better of his righteous demeanor, but is was a small matter to again assume the phiz of a brunette saint after the eruption had passed.

It was a matter of some worry, however, to Bad-Eye, that his religious bearings, his nightly sitting under the droppings of the sanctuary, his steady loyal backing up of the cayenne rantings of the "Visiting Reverend," did not seem to produce much impression on the evangelist.

On the contrary, that "Bible-banger" smiled s a r d o n i c a l l y at the deeply pious grunts, the mighty Amens of the "Seeker." He apparently refused to enthuse over Bad-Eye's obtrusive change of heart, and his indifference caused Bad-Eye to confide to Slick Amos: "Dat spindling nigger preachaw is got prejudis' in his heart again' me. Little ol' bantam! If he fools wid me I shore will raise up. Dem yaller coon 'vangelists makes me sick."

Great was the rejoicing on an eventful night at the tent when, at the top of the great swells of melody produced by a thousand lusty throats, Unc' Bad-Eye swam up to the mourners' bench to be prayed for. Bathed in perspiration, groaning like a horse with the colic, Unc' Bad-Eye wallowed in the straw, while the old guard of deacons and sisters rallied around his prostrate form, yelling prayers and ejaculations of glory at the top of stentorian voices. In about twenty minutes of "wrastlin' in prayer," an aged brother with a voice like a siren whistle arose and announced that "Br'er Johnson have come through." This was the signal for another outburst of prayer, praise and song. Looking much chastened, Unc' Bad-Eye arose from his knees to take a sitting posture facing the rejoicing congregation. After a whispered consultation with the "mourner," the officiating minister announced that the baptizing would take place the following Sabbath in the branch near the Ice Plant. Many congratulatory hands gripped those of Bad-Eye, welcoming him as a candidate for church membership. Especially fervent was the grasp of Slick Amos, who expressed the hope in a loud voice, that Brother Johnson would make a good member and useful officer of the church, and one who could keep the books and the money all straight. The latter thought met with a hearty accord from all except the Evangelist, who slightly frowned.

On the appointed Sabbath, the colored constituency gathered at the baptizing pool about three thousand strong. A small brook had been damned by them, making a little lake thirty feet in length, five feet deep, and ten feet in width, with unusually steep banks. On the levee, penning this pool on both sides, hundreds craned necks to see how pastor and convert deported themselves. The evangelist waded out into the stream first, then turned and awaited the approach of the candidate. Unc' Bad-Eye, dressed within an inch of his life, gingerly felt his cautious way down the bank, and into the water, eyeing dubiously the slender form, the attenuated arms, the flabby muscles of the pigmy rev-

erend, but nevertheless advancing until he reached the preacher's side. The parson seized the "Seeker" in the conventional way, and as he tilted him slowly backward began with the ritualistic form, "Brother Johnson, I baptize thee," but he got very little beyond this, as the immense weight of Unc' Bad-Eye broke the preacher's hold on him, resulting in the candidate sinking in five feet of water, and giving him an accidental, but thorough ducking.

Spouting water like a porpoise, with both fists clenched, Unc' Bad-Eye rose from the pool fairly choking with muddy water and wrath. Wading rapidly to the shore, he climbed the steep bank, dripping like the eaves of a house; then shaking himself as does a wet dog, he turned so as to survey the entire scene. For a moment, he made an effort to command his temper, but failed; then, although he could fairly see that five hundred dollars drifting away from him, nevertheless, he shook his fists at the entire concourse, saying splutteringly: "Some nigger is going to get drownded, yet, with this damn foolishness," and walked away without a word or glance backward.

At the far edge of the crowd he turned and bawled with the full strength of his leather lungs: "Dat yaller nigger preacher is a fake; he let me loose on purpose. Go chase yourself wid your old church; I has done backslid."

THE CRAVEN

By HERMAN G. SEELY

IN the Black Gang compartments, the stokers slept uneasily in innumerable canvas hammocks, for the seven-inch gun shutters were in to shut out the rising storm, and the air stifled with its odor of many human beings packed into too small a space. Now and then, a toil-weary coal passer tossed restlessly and muttered incoherent nothings, and once a sharp cry rose above the whistling of the northeaster in the signal lanyards and the uneasy creaking of the battleship as she lay anchored in the Roads.

Suddenly, from below, came a terrific, yet muffled, concussion that drove the air from the sleepers' lungs and awakened them to startled consciousness, followed by screams, highpitched and quavering, as of souls in mortal agony, the soft rustle of innumerable dust particles settling again to a resting place, and a more horrible silence that was broken by the sharp, brazen bugle call to fire quarters.

Though the sleep daze was still heavy in his brain, John Glennon swung to the deck and fell into the double line that was forming in front of the engineer's office with the regularity engendered by many weekly drills. Indeed, only the waving, ghost-like arms, as half-clad men struggled into their white jumpers, and the anxiety marking the faces gave sign that anything unusual had occurred.

In the stuffy little log room, telephone and signal bells jangled incessantly as the yeoman's voice pierced the din:

"No, sir; nothing from the fire rooms yet. I'm trying to find out what's happened, now."

Down the long line of men ran incessant whisperings that the nervous little Junior Ensign in charge tried vainly to suppress.

"It's bunker gas! Remember, 219's thermostat went off this afternoon? What auxiliary section's on in the fire rooms? Only two boilers lit. Yes, but number seven was leaking like a kettle when I was below. Shame to have kept her going. Wonder who's killed?"

And the head of the column caught the news that the yeoman's shrill, tense voice finally transmitted to the bridge:

"Officer of the watch reports a two-inch tube in boiler nine failed. Yes, sir, six injured—two perhaps fatally."

After secure had sounded, Glennon struggled back into his hammock, with nerves a-tremble. It was the first entrance of tragedy into the lad's life, and he lay with a sinking sensation in his stomach and a clammy perspiration on his brow, staring at the steel deck girder above his head, until the blatant strains of reveille routed him to another day's work in the bag alleys.

The engineer's force had gathered in excited groups of three's and four's and made his progress with the broom down the two long, narrow passageways with their rows of canvas bags, well nigh impossible. Presently, he found himself listening, open-mouthed, to the story of the night's horror.

"They say Pete Dolan's dyin'."

"Yes. Never no chance, anyway. He was a living scald when they carried him for'd."

"And Quaker Pete says he found

Jimmy Ryan, him that was his pal, a-stretched over a dead boiler, weepin' as if his heart would break."

"Well he might. He'd just gone to the engine-room water bucket for a drink, and was the first back into the fire room after the explosion. They say things were terrible."

"Terrible! Say, go and look at the washroom. That tells what the explosion was."

John Glennon went and stared in amazement. The escapes that led from the fire rooms had directed a hail of soapy, grimy boiler sediment into the low, white room, and transformed the walls into a gray horror, that Pigeonhole Pete's force of scrubbers was unable to efface. Again were the excited little groups gathered, and again morbid curiosity forced the alley sweeper to listen.

"So we carried 'em back to the sick bay," went on a member of the rescue party. "God! They were a ghastly lot. Red and parboiled and wrinkled like a lot of scalded hogs, and not a word from any of 'em. The doctor was flyin' 'round the sick bay, spilling dope all over his new uniform. And he comes to Pete Dolan.

" 'Doctor,' says Pete, 'you'd better look after the fellow next me. I'm gone!' I think, myself, the pain must 'a' driven him out of his head, for when the marine captain brings a basin of oil to put his poor, shriveled hands in, he smiles that terrible smile of his and says:

" 'Captain, you're a brick. This is the first bit of heaven I've had in life.'

"Then a hospital apprentice bustles up. 'Doctor,' says he, 'there ain't bedding for all of 'em.'

" 'Go up to my room,' cuts in the officer, 'and get blankets, curtains, everything you can lay hands on. And be quick!'

"Pete looks up to him with that awful smile.

" 'Captain.'

"The captain looks back at him. 'Yes,' says he, gentle-like.

" 'You may be nothing but a marine, but damned if you ain't a gentleman!'

"Then Hans in the cot next—they say he's going out, too—whimpers about his mother and Pete turns over in spite of the pain it cost, and says, 'Cheer up, old man, you'll be all right,' and gives a gasp and dies."

The iron door to the wash room swung back against the bulkhead with a heavy clang and the speaker started.

"Go on," urged a member of his audience. "It's only Bill, drunk again on his hidden stock o' booze."

But the newcomer, a man with a god's forehead and a weak, drunkard's mouth, was not to be denied.

"Merry li'l party!" he hiccoughed. "Talkin' over las' night's celebration? Wa's the cor'ner's jury say?"

"Shut up, broke in a hoarse voiced fireman.

"Anything to please," persisted the unsteady figure. "Sing li'l song?" He broke into a nerve-racking, tremulous yail:

"Our boilers are a-leakin',
You can hear the steam a-speakin',
As we're sweatin' in the fire rooms down below,
And it says, 'I'll send you flyin';
You'll all be scalded—dyin',
For I'll blow you all the way to Jericho!

"Ain't it an epic? Ain't it—" The words ended in a strangled sob as an over-wrought giant's fist sent the singer crashing against the bulkhead, where he fell, a crumpled heap, on the grimy, flooded floor.

"Ain't it enough," roared the burly figure, "that the boilers are as bad as that, and that we know it, without your singin' such a song?"

"Are the other boilers leaking, too?" hazarded Glennon timidly.

"Leakin'?" answered the speaker. "Say, go look at the steam log in the office. That tells how they've been died out for repairs, time and time again.

The whole steam engineering department ought to be scrapped for junk. That's how rotten this old packet is!"

The sweeper turned away with a feeling of thanksgiving that his seemingly slight frame had earned the work in the bag alleys. To be below and suffer the fate of Pete Dolan— He shuddered as if from a chill.

Fresh news made its way along the wooden tables at noon mess.

"They say there's a steamer in distress off the coast and that we're going out after her. The watch list's up by the Log Room."

Glennon Joined the anxious throng around the bulletin board.

"It's murder!" buzzed the voices. "Rank murder! We ought to be in the repair yard ourselves, 'stead of saving another ship." Then a friend hailed the sweeper.

"Wish I had your luck, John. I'm on number four and they say she's as bad as they make 'em."

Thus it came about that the U.S.S. Hardship, with the others of her division —long, lean fighters that had seen better days—pounded out to sea in a stiff northeaster, with the seven boilers that were able to be lit straining every fiber under forced draught to replace the twelve that were her normal complement.

Below in the starboard bag alley, a sympathetic conclave had gathered around Ryan, who was sobbing weakly.

"I ain't no coward," he said in a voice barely above a whisper, "God knows I ain't no coward. Wasn't I the first into that wrecked, steaming fire room? But my nerve's gone, plumb gone, that's all. I won't go below on the fires again. I can't. Every time I go down in a fire room, I see Pete a-grinning at me with his shriveled, lobster face, and sayin', 'Jimmy, old boy, I'm done.' Then the cold sweat breaks and I want to run. But I ain't no coward. God knows, I ain't no coward!"

"Go up to the log room," suggested a voice. "Perhaps the yeoman 'll put another man in your place."

"He'll have to," whispered Ryan, as he staggered up the ladder.

The yeoman, a lean, rat-faced little man, whom the Black Gang despised, looked up from his typewriter desk. He had a press of reports on the accident to write, and was therefore irritable.

"You're able-bodied enough, aren't you?" he snapped.

Ryan's eyes filled as again his voice sank to a whisper.

"I can't go below, man! I can't." He lifted a palsied arm. "Why, I couldn't hold a slice bar in my hands. My nerve's gone—just gone!"

The typist's beady eyes gleamed. "Do you refuse duty?"

"No," persisted the monotone, "but my nerve's gone—just gone!"

The yeoman shrugged his shoulders and turned again to the machine.

"Listen!" The fireman braced himself against a wall filing case, as a new note in his sobbing voice compelled attention. "Every time I go below, I see Pete Dolan a-grinning at me with that red, wrinkled face o' his in that steam filled fire room. And says he, 'Jimmy, I'm done. Look.' And he grabs a finger nail with one shriveled hand and pulls the flesh back in a long, skinny strip from the gleaming bone. I can see that finger now! I *can't* go below."

The yeoman's face paled. "See the engineer officer. I can't change the watch sheet after he's signed it."

In his anxiety, Ryan laid a pleading hand on that officer's shoulder as he sat at his little stateroom desk.

"You won't send me below on the fires, will you, sir?" he implored brokenly. "Every time I go below, I see Pete Dolan, with that ghastly grin o' his, a-stripping the flesh off his naked finger bones. My nerve's gone, sir, just gone. But I ain't a coward."

The lieutenant's face went gray in the

porthole's light, gray as the tarnished bars and anchor on his uniform collar, and his shoulders drooped as if from a heavy weight.

"No, Ryan," he reassured him gently. "You won't have to go on the fires. And I'll see that the other men in the rescue party are taken off, too. Marks will be notified of the changes. You needn't worry."

The log room messenger found Glennon on deck with a throng of curious tars, for the wrecked ship was in sight and the fact that a revenue cutter stood by her did not detract from the novelty of the scene.

"Take Williams's place on the steaming list," were his orders, "to go on in No. 3 fire room with the eight to twelve watch."

Glennon's laughing comrades became lost in a momentary mist. His turn had come! Sick at heart, he sought a quiet corner by the blacksmith's shop on the superstructure, where he huddled forlornly until the bos'n's whistle blew "Pipe down" for mess.

"You're down on Three?" asked his vis-à-vis at the long wooden table.

Glennon nodded a miserable assent.

"Don't envy you," was the frank rejoinder. "Messenger of the watch told Pigeon-hole Pete she isn't standing the forced draught any too well. Don't think they'd a-lit her if we weren't five boilers shy already."

The alley sweeper pushed his plate of stew away and sought the upper deck, amid the laughter of his messmates, who diagnosed the case as sea sickness.

So he was to be a second Pete Dolan! And his mother, standing in the little front parlor, some morning, as the postman closed the gate, would tear the long, official envelope open eagerly, only to find the usual formal condolence and a check for three month's pay—his death money! Unconsciously, the refrain of Bill's drunken song crept into his fear-crazed brain:

"And it says, 'I'll send you flyin',
You'll all be scalded—dyin',
For I'll blow you all the way to Jericho!"

He dared not go below, and yet, how, where, could he escape?

The flapping corner of a whaleboat's canvas covering as it lay in the davits, caught his eye and he crept in, to lie trembling across the tangle of rigging in the bottom of the boat until sleep came.

A strong hand jerked him back to consciousness as Quaker Pete's voice bellowed from the outer darkness into his shrinking ear.

"Get below, you shirk, before you're knocked there! The word's been passed this half hour."

He stumbled down the slippery ladders into the engine room, followed by his Nemesis, who added speed to his progress by sundry kicks and blows.

In the fire room, the men greeted him with silent scorn and he fell miserably to passing the black diamond from the coal bunker to the floor plates. Suddenly a fireman dropped his slice bar and shouted:

"Look out!"

Glennon's over-wrought nerves may have tricked him, but he fancied a slight hiss came from the boiler.

The water tender in charge barely moved a muscle. "Send for the officer of the watch," he ordered quietly.

The ensign came, callow and inexperienced, and smiled an inscrutable smile.

"I hear nothing," he announced, as he turned back to the oil-laden atmosphere of the engine room.

Again the weary work with the coal. The dust rose in little clouds and clogged the alley sweeper's nostrils until he fought for breath, and collected on his perspiring shoulders and back, dyeing them a glistening black.

Then the second hiss sounded from the boiler, sibilant, long-drawn, and ominously distinct.

"There she goes!" yelled a fireman.

Glennon dropped his shovel and fled, to find escape blocked by the water tender, who knocked him sprawling to the floor plates.

"You would, would you?" he roared with an oath. "Back to your job and draw the fire under the boiler."

Glennon picked himself up mechanically and joined the rest of the watch, who sweated and swore and toiled with slice bars and shovels until the white coals were heaped high on the searing deck and the danger was over.

When his relief came, he stumbled miserably to the washroom where he took a half-hearted bucket bath before he turned into his hammock. Then he found himself so overweary, mentally and physically, that, though he pitched and tossed and prayed, the longed-for sleep would not come.

Was this the navy life he had so wanted, back in his home town? The nightmare of the past day returned anew—the groups in the bag alleys—the gruesome, horror-filled tales—and the boiler in No. 3 that nearly gave way. He thought of the ostracism that would be his—for the men of the Black Gang have few dealings with cowards—and he wept weakly, for his spirit was broken. Then he dozed until the rattle of the anchor chains for'd, that told of the safe return to the Roads, brought him back to the torture of his overwrought imagination.

The fire rooms would kill him sooner or later. That was certain. Could a hospital transfer be made through shamming, he wondered? Certain tales of men with carefully laid plots that had failed arose, and he knew that the doctor was far too clever to be duped. That hope was futile.

He listened dully to a detail of men removing the gun shutters, that the night breeze might lessen the closeness between decks, then started into alertness. Why had he not thought of it? Certainly the escape would be an easy one. He swung from his hammock as silently as a cat and leaned against an adjacent gun mount, staring out on the water for many minutes.

The storm had blown itself out and the moon shone down clear and calm from a sky of broken, silver-edged clouds, upon a Chesapeake that was fast becoming quiet. Even now, only a swell was running with the incoming tide, and over on shore, the friendly lights twinkled cheerily as if in invitation to leave the madhouse behind.

Then he turned and cursed himself roundly for such cowardice. He would fight things through, live down the stigma that he had incurred and play the man.

Suddenly, from the hammock nearest, came Jimmy Ryan's thin treble as he babbled in his sleep:

"And Pete Dolan smiles that ghastly smile and says, 'Jimmy, I'm done.' And he strips the flesh from his long, wrinkled fingers and laughs."

Glennon stopped short. His face went white and set as he clambered shakily over the mount out on the gun sponson. From the bridge, four bells struck; then silence reigned, save for the lapping of the water against the ship's gray sides, as the alley sweeper, after a long look about him, dropped noiselessly into the water and struck out for the welcoming shore.

A woman's tears are the greatest water-power known to man.—*Atchison County Mail.*

HAZARD AND O'CHANCE

By FRANCIS W. DEVER

VICIOUSLY the September sun cast its enervating rays on the macadem of the Black Horse Pike. Wearily the drooping figures of Terrence O'Chance and me shuffled over it, (the pike, of course), burdened each with the weight of a traveling bag and a heart heavy with woe; and with pockets that sang not the sweet melody of jingling coins.

This wallop of Fate we would, ordinarily, have accepted with the calm philosophy of practice. Involved in our late descent from affluence, however, were many things which rendered it, even to our callous hides, a blow most cruel indeed.

Before carrying you over the route from effect to cause, a word or two anent the *dramatis personae* would seem not out of place:

Terrence O'Chance is five feet, eight, ovate and ample of back. Red hair and imperturbability are a rare combination. Terrence possesses it. Also, he has a captivating, redeeming, blue-eyed humor. And when you hear the voice of him, you sense the purl of water through the green-scoured hills of Erin; and you know that Terrence O'Chance has hung by the heels from Blarney Castle, and pressed his lips against a certain facet of cold, unresponsive stone, not once only, but often, and passionately.

My own specifications I will omit. In their stead, permit me to offer that if the autobiography of alias Dave Hazard were written, it would contain sequent and closely related chapters entitled: *Broadway on the High Gear; The Expensive Heart of Mazie Terpsichore; A Row with Dad; and Pruned from the Family Tree.*

Two weeks prior to the staging of this comedy, Terry and I desired to operate in the town of Oyster Grass, New Jersey. One of our preliminaries was to call on Reuben Venal, chief of police. Character analysis accomplished, we discussed our enterprise with him. As a result, it was mutually agreed and understood that each and every night at the hour of eight, and stealthily, Terry or I would deposit in the yawning palm of the officer on our beat, the meager sum of two dollars. Said Reuben Venal, in return, was to render himself and his department, as far as possible, concerning a certain stuss game, bereft of sight, speech and hearing. Further: Hazard and O'Chance were to be advised of any raid, foray, visit, or other device tending to jeopardize their peace, liberty, or comfort, at least thirty minutes in advance.

Ten days that little game of ours prospered. Then, unheralded, one night at the hour of nine, the officer into whose yearning palm Terry or I had deposited each and every night at the hour of eight, and stealthily, the meager sum of two dollars, closed our doors and projected us into the august presence of His Honor, the mayor.

We were held for court then in session. Ere another two suns had sunk beneath the hills that fringed the Western rim, the Grand Jury had us indicted. We pleaded guilty. The judge was an adept at knowing what the traffic would bear. He fined us two hundred and fifty each, accepting my stop watch, worth three

hundred, for the twenty dollars we were short; and suspended sentence. In reference to our future, he advised most kindly; and gave us three hours to relieve the country of the "odium" of our presence. The cynosure of eyes choleric, eyes contemptuous, and eyes commiserating, we slunk from the court house. With an hour to spare, we hurried over the county line.

Again you see Terrence O'Chance and Dave Hazard, misanthropes, wilted, legweary, and barren of funds, plodding disconsolately over the somber surface of the Black Horse Pike.

" 'Tis a foine pass we've come to when two dacent respectable gamblers can't ply their trade without bein' persecuted be a bunch of rubes that couldn't tell a full house from low casino," mourned Terry.

"We rave about Rooshia and the Jews but, in me own opinion: 'Charity begins at home.' It's got so a man can't participate in a game of penny ante in the gintle warmth of his own foireside without some self-appointed eradicator of vice reportin' the incident to the police. The country's gone to the divil."

"Professional jealousy, Terry," I explained. "The pirates of finance have it on us. With wealth on their side, they're out to eliminate competition. What chance have honest men like us against them?"

"Niver a monad," said Terry. "But there's wan little oasis in this desert of persecution. Down on the board-walk, the other day, a chap was tellin' me about it. It lies south of the Mason & Dixon line.

"Pick and shovel men there receive four dollars a day; and the poor unfortunates are rakin' their brains for congenial ways of partin' with it. Law and order would be as welcome as roaches in Mrs. Rohrer's kitchen. There's only wan first-class game of chance in the town, too, and it don't begin to handle the patronage. Be golly, Dave, if we had a hundred dollars, we'd go down there, and soon be lopin' along on the road to filthy opulence."

"One hundred dollars!" I laughed bitterly. "If we had fifty cents right now, we wouldn't be dining on raw turnips and tomatoes, believe me. If we don't reach Philadelphia shortly, we'll be stricken with acute indigestion from worry and lack of proper food." Just then, as a touring car rushed past, some one in it threw a folded newspaper. It took Terry on the side of the head, and ricocheted sharply to the road. Terry rubbed his head ruefully. Angrily my eyes followed the car.

"Forget it," smiled Terry. "I have no kick to register. It moight have been a brick."

He stepped to the newspaper and picked it up. At once he turned to the sporting page. We read the Belgrave entries together.

"Look at Pat McGlynn in the third," yelled Terry. "Nointy-eight pounds, and apprintace allowance. The handicapper must have been intoxicated. If Pat McGlynn couldn't bate that field with William Howard Taft up, Oi'm no judge of skates. The pickers have overlooked him, too. Oi'll bit ye could get as good as tin to wan. And us without a cint! Dave, if we can raise twinty dollars be to-morrow at iliven, and tiligraph it to McTurf, we'll be anyway two hundred dollars to the good. Thin we'd go down and show thim poor pick and shovel min how to be happy though married to four dollars a day."

I laughed quietly as Terry raved on.

About two o'clock that afternoon, we came upon a little four by six box by the roadside. Terry peered in the window.

"It must be a pay station," he announced. "There's a tiliphone in it."

This was my second trip over the Black Horse Pike. My first had been made by automobile. The chauffeur, a garrulous fellow, had informed me regarding this very box.

"It's a pay station, all right," I an-

swered cynically. "Not the kind you mean, though. It's one of those diabolic contrivances known as speed traps.

"Another legal shakedown. There's no danger of us getting caught in it to-day, is there?" I laughed. "At any rate, it's only operative on Sundays when business is particularly good. You see, if it were worked every day, motorists would learn to run through it slowly, and another 'jestice o' the peace' and another 'conshtable' would be working for their living."

"Only on Sunday you say it's worked," mused Terry. "I wonder now—" Again he peered through the window. "There's a copy of the Revoised Shtatutes lyin' on the 'phone stand. I wonder now—say, Dave, aren't ye almost a lawyer?"

"Another year at school would have turned the trick," I answered.

"Foine!" His eyes scintillated with the joy of a new-born inspiration. "The trap's sit. Ye may be the jestice of the pace, Oi'll be the conshtable. To avoid confusion, and minimize complications, we'll shtop no cars bearin' New Jersey licenses. It moight also be well to sit up yer office in the cut back of this hill. Whin Oi make an arrest, Oi'll have the prisoners droive in. The hearin's had better be proivate."

"You don't mean for us to—"

He interrupted while I was grasping the import of the scheme: "Ye get me, Oi think."

"Terry, you've got brains," I said with much *eclat;* "no one who knew you long could well gainsay that. This proposition of yours looks good; it teems with the spice of adventure. There's only one serious objection to it; you're taking something and giving nothing in return. Was it Jeff Peters or Andy Carnegie who laid so much stress on this violation of business ethics? Whoever it was expressed my sentiment."

"How much does the Shtate of New Jersey owe us roight now?" he inquired.

"Considering mental anguish, ruin of business, lawyer's fees and fine, I should say about three thousand dollars. Neverthe—"

He again interrupted. "Yer estimate's low. But it disposes of the shtate. As to the motorist: There is written in the shtatutes of this shtate a law which provides a pinalty to be assissed on thim that droive their automobiles or motorcycles beyant a given shpade.

"Ivery toime a motorist violates this shtatute and gets away with it, he defrauds and insults this inglorious commonwealth. In shpite of yer opinion of shpade traps, Oi think they're a grand and not unnaccassary corractive insthitution. Not less than half a dozen toimes this very day we have been missed be the the diameter of an oylash as some woild divil shot by. Can't ye see that we're doin' the shtate a sarvice be the settin' of this trap? At the same toime the money we collect in the name of the shtate, and turn over to ourselves rajuces the shtate's debt to us, and don't cost the shtate anything. Wan thing Oi'll grant: the shtate won't appreciate the work we're about to do. But republics and commonwealths are provarbially ungrateful."

I wrung his hand. Terry's logic was compelling. From the depths of my traveling bag, I disinterred a field glass. I handed it to Terry.

"Remember," I reminded, "a New Jersey license is as good as a passport. And we'd better not stop anything running less than forty miles an hour.

"From past observation, we'll keep busy enough at that."

"Very well, Yer Honor." Terry saluted comically.

The first car to feel the spring of the trap bore a New York license.

"Ye are under arrist for shpadin'," Terry informed the chauffeur.

A man on the rear seat bent forward smiling. He consulted a bill-fold of unusual promise.

"My friend," he stated, "we are in a

great hurry. We plead guilty. How much do we owe you?"

Terry and I held council. I came forward.

"You are fined five dollars and costs," I announced. "Seven dollars and fifty cents, total."

He proffered a crisp ten-dollar bill. "Good day, gentlemen," he bade us genially, and made no reference to his change.

"Pretty soft, Terry, pretty soft, eh, what?" I chortled.

"That wan was, yis," Terry admitted. "They won't all be in a hurry, though."

The next two cars bore Pennsylvania licenses. After some argument, and reference to the Revised Statutes, we collected from each seven dollars and fifty cents. We might have gotten more, but the motorists seemed pretty good fellows.

Then came the fourth car; in it a tartar. New York should have been ashamed of him.

"Outrageous," he blustered when Terry informed him of the charge. "Outrageous, I repeat. Let me warn you that I will pay no fine, sir. First I will rot in one of your filthy jails."

"Ye were runnin' at the rate of fifty miles an hour, contrary to one of the shtatutes of this shtate, the number of which I disremember," Terry answered without show of spirit.

"You are mistaken, sir. I was not running a mile over thirty-five," asserted he who would rot in jail.

"Well, thirty's the limit," said Terry. "Bring yer machine off the highway. Ye'll be blockin' traffic."

Court convened. Preliminaries over.

"Mr. Plethore," said I, "you have heard the charge of 'Constable Burk.' What have you to say?"

Mr. Plethore had a great deal to say. He directed a tirade of invectives against the State of New Jersey—the integrity of its judiciary; the honesty of its people, (called them leeches, vampires, and sandburrs), and their culture; and deeply into the tender flesh of its traditions, he jabbed the harpoon of coarse irony. Vocabulary of abuse exhausted, he paused.

"You seem to forget that you are in the presence of the court," I reminded.

"Court!" he howled. "A court of grafters, I should call it."

"Foine him for contimpt," whispered Terry.

"Enough said, my friend," I warned the defendant, assuming a mien of legal severity. "You are fined ten dollars for contempt of court, and ten dollars and costs for speeding. And if the fine does not have the effect of civilizing your tongue, we will try harsher measures."

"I desire to enter an appeal," he stated with the wheeze of an exhausting gasbag.

"You may do so," I bluffed. "Bear in mind, however, that your remarks relative to the courts of this state will not look well on the records. You have your rights, nevertheless, so we will enter an appeal." Mr. Plethore engrossed himself in deep thought.

"Your Honor," said he, for the first time, and in melliferous tones, "an apology is due you. Permit me to offer it humbly and sincerely. This matter has annoyed and inconvenienced me more than you can imagine; and it is clear that I have allowed my temper to overrule my better judgment. Permit me to rid myself of the unpleasant incident. Will you kindly vacate the appeal? I have but fifteen dollars in cash on my person; will you accept my cheque for the balance?"

"Your apology alters the aspect of the case," I said. "Appeal not entered. Your fine for speeding is reduced to seven fifty and costs, and the law will consider its dignity upheld by a five instead of a ten dollar fine. Fifteen dollars removes your obligation to the court. Thank you. May we meet again under less embarrassing circumstances. Bon Voyage!"

Mr. Plethore and his little Ford ram-

bled on. As he moved off, I noted on his brow a cumulus of anger. So did Terry.

"Dave," said Terry, "it's about toime for us to be hittin' the grit. If Oi'm any judge of human nature, Mr. Plethore is goin' to bawl us out to ivery traveler he meets. Complications are inivitable, as me friend the poet ixprisses it. A half hour hince, and ivery pitchfork wielder in this locality will be trailin' us. The day has been profitable; why risk further humiliation at the hands of this accursed commonwealth."

Walking rapidly, we soon came to a flag station of the Philadelphia & Fog River Railroad. Opportunely, too.

Shortly we were bowling merrily toward the big city across the Delaware. Once over the river, we breathed with relief.

"Terry," I conceded, "the thirty-nine dollars we collected this afternoon is the product of your gray matter. Minus carfare expended, the disposition of it lies with you. I believe you mentioned a horse called Pat McGlynn, running at Belgrave to-morrow in a field of dogs. How much goes down on Pat McGlynn?"

"Since ye put it that way," answered Terry, "we'll woire twinty-five."

First, though, we took the "L." Time to telegraph was not so precious. On the other hand, it were better not to linger long near the Jersey ferry. At Fortieth and Market Streets we left the "L." Immediately we hunted up a telegraph office. As telegraph companies are somewhat chary of handling business relating to horse racing, unpleasant questions are sometimes asked in this connection. Communicating with McTurf by means of a code, we wired with the twenty-five, this message:

> See Pat after two to-morrow. Make best bargain.
>
> HAZARD & O'CHANCE.

It occurred to me, after the telegram was on its way, that it would have been safer to have used "McGlynn" instead of "Pat" to designate the entry. Terry laughed when I voiced the thought.

"McTurf makes no mistakes," he assured me. "You should know that by this time."

"Third race: Fedora wins!" I read to Terry next evening from a sporting extra.

To a café we wandered, and sought solace in drinks of many colors, and maundered of evil stars, and the tenacity of misfortune until the shrill, defiant crow of a cock in a poultry store nearby apprised us of approaching dawn. In the nepenthic grip of saturation, we wended a tortuous journey to our little third-floor-back.

There in the gentle arms of Slumber (or Morpheus, if you insist), we knew no more until well into the morning, when some one knocked loudly upon our door. It was the landlady. An expressman desired that we sign for a money package, she stated. Terry and I rushed to the street door. Sure enough, there *was* a money package—value three hundred and fifteen dollars! Terry opened it. This is the gist of the note it contained:

> Twelve to one was the best I could get on Fedora. Harris and I cracked a couple of pints on you which accounts for the missing ten. Don't be so cryptical in indicating your skate hereafter. You had me guessing for a few minutes. Regards.
>
> MCTURF.

"If McTurf calls this a joke," said Terry, "Oi'm a willin' victim."

"Sentiment echoed," I returned.

For fully an hour Terry and I mooted this strange matter.

"How about the tiligraph company?" suggested the resourceful Terry.

We called at the office from which we had telegraphed McTurf.

"Will you please have ours of yesterday to McTurf, New York, repeated?" I asked the clerk.

A little later the clerk submitted for our inspection the following:

> See *hat* after two. Make best bargain.

A TOUCH OF CLASS

By THOMSON BURTIS

SAM Hoffman, producer and principal comedian of the Empire Musical Stock Company, was on one of his regularly scheduled rampages. The little blonde chorus girl who worked on the left end of the front line was the immediate recipient of his wrath.

"Ain't your feet big enough to hold you up?" he snarled. "That stumble of yours threw the whole number out! Because you got the horse laugh I s'pose you think you're a commedienne now. There's no room in this show for any one that can't keep from goin' to sleep on her feet."

The girl made no reply, but turned away wearily. The group of chorus girls who had gathered around looked frightened, amused, or indifferent, according to their several dispositions. They made haste now to scatter and line up, for their next number was due.

Hoffman's chief comedy assistant had surveyed the familiar scene from a judicious point of observation on a property trunk.

"If that guy Hoffman was stranded in a desert and I should happen along with a cartload of grub, I'd have trouble decidin' whether to take him or leave him," he remarked to the girl who shared his perch.

"Just a ham actor gone wrong," agreed the girl, her pretty, piquant face showing lines of weariness through the make-up. It was the fourth and last show of the day, and the hardworking little soubrette was fagged out.

"He was layin' around Chicago wonderin' where his next meal was comin' from until Little picked him up when he had to have some one in a hurry. I know that for a fact. And now he's got a few square meals under his belt and it's gone to his head," said Hanlon as he carefully felt of the bulbous, flaring red nose which disfigured his attractively homely face for comedy purposes. It was a humorous proboscis he had evolved—a beet-like projection of putty that he was always careful to have adjusted at the precisely impudent angle necessary to evoke the laugh so dear to an actor's heart. Each time he went on the same process was gone through, for on that dully glowing nose rested a goodly share of responsibility.

"I'm gettin' sick and tired of this four-a-day stuff, Jimmy. Rehearse half the mornin' and then work till eleven for a crowd of ten-twenty dray drivers! I wish I was back on the road again. Why, when I was with the Bigtown Babies show we—"

"Ain't that what I been tellin' you?" broke in Hanlon eagerly. "Workin' down here with a guy like that knockin' us around? We could go into vaudeville with a nice, classy little two-act and clean up, girlie! Listen? You see we could open up with a nice, fast little double song, you in a swell dress and me in the soup-and-fish, and then go into some fast crossfire that's quiet and nifty—I got it right in my trunk this minute—and then—"

"I know, but look at the chance we're takin', Jimmy. We gotta go to New York and lay out all our cash, and more, on clothes, and then if we didn't make good where'd we be?"

The man's heavily made up lips contorted in a confident laugh.

"Not get by, Lottie? Say, leave it to little Jimmy! Why, when I was travelin' with the Tamale show I was cleanin' up on the road everywhere, and there was agents waitin' to see me work in New York. If I hadn't made a fool of myself on booze and got the ditch, I'd been there now. We couldn't miss, Lottie! You got the looks and the class, and believe me I ain't no hearse when it comes to travelin' in the dress-suit bunch myself. All it takes is quiet, nifty stuff with the right dressin' and it's a cinch! Twenty minutes twice a day on the big time, and a pay envelop every Saturday night so big it's goin' to make me lose my head and organize a two act for life the end of the first week!"

The plastered makeup which hid his face could not mask the honest feeling that shone in his eyes. Lottie gazed fixedly at a dusty, disused set that leaned against the bald stage wall. She put her hand out quickly and gave Hanlon's big paw a fleeting squeeze.

"I know, Jimmy. This ain't the first time we've fought it out, but I guess I ain't got the nerve. It ain't so worse here at that. It's kinda nice to be livin' in one place and have the little flat, knowin' that business is sure to be good and the little old envelope comin' regular every Saturday night. Maybe when we get a little more jack saved we can try it."

"Waitin' never got nobody nothin'!" stated Hanlon as he slid off his perch. It was nearing the time for his cue. "We can take my eight hundred and what you got, chuck it all in, and that'll fix us up with the duds. You can make three changes, and I'll have on the old black and white. The season is just comin' on now and we can book up without half tryin'. Then after a couple o' months we can blow ourselves to a good lookin' drop, buy some material and be flirtin' around with the number seven spot at the Palace. Honest, honey, we can do it! I been off the firewater ever since I saw you, you know that, and we can make a break from this cheap stuff and make somethin' of ourselves. Why—"

His pleading was interrupted by Hoffman.

"I don't spose the show amounts to much alongside of your bright and gleamin' conversational gifts," he sneered. "I am informed that our cue is comin' in about seven seconds. Was you plannin' to go on this evenin'?" Hoffman prided himself on his ability to make unfortunate underlings squirm.

Hanlon turned to Lottie ostentatiously.

"We'll talk about it after the show," he said urbanely, and without so much as a look at the other man he walked to the wings and donned the misfit derby which had been in his hand. The straight man and the corpulent prima donna, who had been struggling through a lengthy song together, finally finished and turned toward the wings.

"Here comes Count Hickey now!" bawled the juvenile, and amid the cheers of the line of chorus girls Hanlon entered. As the six-piece orchestra gave a last blare Hanlon stumbled and did one of the falls for which he was beloved of his audience. A burst of applause greeted him from the crowd that jammed the cheap, tawdry theatre from pit to dome. Evidently the grotesque figure, with eyebrows and mouth artfully made up to look small and pinched, was a familiar and popular feature of the show.

"I feel so l-o-o-se!" remarked Count Hickey confidentially as he came smoothly to his feet, and the house rocked in glee. As he stumbled loose-jointedly about the stage, striving apparently to shake the prima donna's hand, a continuous howl of merriment came from the sea of dim faces over the footlights.

Hoffman entered a moment later, a light patter of applause being his portion.

The show, a hodge-podge of outworn comedy features loosely strung together, played along rapidly. Jimmy Hanlon was the mainstay of the comedy section, and work as Hoffman would he could not gather the laughs as his partner did. Baron Cohen was distinctly overshadowed by Count Hickey in the estimation of the onlookers, and they left no doubt of it in the mind of anyone. Lottie Harkness, a vivacious, sparkling figure in her diminutive costumes, got an enthusiastic reception from the house, which was seventy-five per cent men. Her number, "All the Boys Are After Me," took three encores. The applause appeared to die somewhat after the last one, and the tired little soubrette raced for the dressing room to make her next change.

A half hour later the "Grand Finale, by the Entire Company!!!" closed in a burst of shrill high notes. Lottie sank into a chair and put both hands to her aching head.

"Me for a sandwich and the little old couch," she sighed to nobody in particular.

"Forget that couch and remember what you're supposed to be drawin' your pay for!" snapped Hoffman, sticking his face, with its exaggerated Hebrew makeup, close to Lottie's. "Whaddaye mean refusin' encores? You stalled all through the show! They was clappin' to see that bathin' suit again out there and you run out on it. Maybe you think you're some singer, but take it from me if you was in long dresses you wouldn't last half a minute!"

"Then you can get somebody else to wear your bathin' suits!" blazed Lottie, her frazzled nerves on edge. "I'm through with this cheap collection of has-beens and never-wasers! Here's my notice, and there'll be a written one layin' on Little's desk in the morning!"

"Gonna jump to the Follies, I suppose!" sneered the producer.

Most of the assembled company laughed at this sally. Lottie's popularity had aroused the inevitable jealousy on the part of those less fortunate, and they enjoyed seeing her humbled thus publicly.

"I'm gonna jump a long way from this cheap-john burlesque troupe, I can tell you that," she sent back, "even if it lands me behind a counter again. It would be great to work in a real show again!"

"The only way you'll get a look at a real show is to buy a ticket!"

"If I do I hope I'll see somethin' besides a would-be comic with nothin' but a nose handed down from Abraham!"

"I notice you fall for the kind that's pasted on, though!" retorted Hoffman.

"That's enough from you, Sam!" snapped Hanlon, who had been watching the progress of affairs with a growing hope of which he was almost ashamed. "And you can take my notice along with Lottie's."

"What's the trouble, Sam?"

A squat, bulky figure shouldered its way through the group of girls and injected itself forcefully into the situation.

"Eva Tanguay here stalled on encores to-night, that's what, Mr. Little. She's gettin' wild applause from four or five 'johns' out front now and she's gettin' too good for the show."

"I'm gettin' out of it, anyway! Take this as my notice, please." And Lottie started forthwith for her dressing room.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!"

Bernard J. Little, once a stagehand and now owner of the four principal theatres of this flourishing Southern city, immediately took the situation in hand. He had not grown to be a theatrical power in a small way without the ability to judge stage property that was valuable for his purposes, and no one knew better than he that his lively soubrette "pulled 'em in" at the Empire.

"I'm gettin' out, too," put in Hanlon quietly.

The owner turned his small eyes to Hanlon and vouchsafed him a quick, surprised look. Verily, this situation bid fair to be a disaster.

"Come up to the office, the three of you!" he commanded crisply. "The rest of you beat it!"

Through the dark, barren theatre the three groped their way in the wake of the stocky form of the owner. He switched on the light, sank into his huge chair and chewed rapidly on his cold cigar.

"Now spill it!" he barked, motioning them to sit down.

Lottie, her pent-up wrath still seething, got the floor an instant ahead of the eager Hoffman.

"This guy Hoffman has been—"

"Let me do the talkin', Lottie," interrupted Hanlon. His heart was beating rapidly as he saw a chance to make the fondly cherished dream of the past few months come true. "It's like this, Mr. Little. Me and Lottie have been plannin' to make a break for vaudeville for quite some time. She's been hangin' off on it until to-night. Sam here bawled her out hard because she wasn't feelin' good and didn't take another encore on her number, but we'd been quittin' in a week or two anyway."

He waited for an outburst of denial from Lottie, but apparently his explanation had taken her so much by surprise that she forgot to go on with her tirade against Hoffman. The producer, who had expected to be compelled to defend himself against a flood of grievances held against him, was more surprised than the girl.

"If a little more money would salve your wounded feelings," began Little, fondling the massive watch chain which rested on his rounded expanse of waistcoat, "why I guess we could—"

"It ain't that, Mr. Little," broke in Jimmy. "Twenty-five more a week, or fifty, or ten, it wouldn't make no difference. We're gonna cut loose, and we're due for the big time. You gotta make somethin' of yourself in this business and cash in while you got the stuff and the public likes you."

"Sure you're not makin' a mistake?" enquired the crafty owner. He saw the fat weekly profit of the Empire dwindling with its two most popular features gone, and the prospect was far from pleasing. He felt precisely as though he were watching a man pick his pocket while his own hands were tied.

"Not a chance!" returned Hanlon breezily, his exultation growing as the silent Lottie made no move to protest against his high-handed mastery of the situation. "We got the stuff, Mr. Little. We've been treated white here, as far as you're concerned, but we want somethin' better than you can give us!"

Hoffman sneered as Hanlon, giving away to his constitutional optimism, enlarged on the way Hanlon and Harkness were going to stop the show at the Palace. Little let Jimmy talk, occasionally darting a look at Lottie from his small eyes, so in contrast to the large, fleshy face.

"Well, if you've made up your mind like that, you two, why go ahead, of course. Silence means consent, eh, Lottie?"

Jimmy held his breath a minute. Would she—

"I'm quittin', Mr. Little," she said shortly, and he leaned back with an expiration of relief.

"O. K. Two weeks from to-night you leave us flat, eh? Well, after you've knocked around up in the big village a while wire me and there'll be tickets back and a job at this end. There's many a good selling plater that never placed in the Suburban!"

"But when one does, he sure cleans up!" said Hanlon.

"Hanlon and Harkness!" he crowed, for all the world as though that magic name was already "up in lights" before his eyes. As they made their way down

stairs to the dressing rooms he poured an unceasing flow of conversation into Lottie's ears. They would rehearse every morning before the time scheduled for the show preparations, and they would have their act in shape to show as soon as a wardrobe was secured in New York.

"It's us for a workout every dewy morn, girlie, and believe me we're gonna be ready to step from the train platform right into the stage door. I got the stuff we'll want to use salted down right now. It's been waitin' for this very time. It won't take us no time at all to get a smooth little dance down pat, and then we're set, eh?"

"I—I can't help bein' scared, Jimmy," admitted Lottie, "but I'm game!"

"You bet you are, girl o' mine. Hanlon and Harkness, in 'A Touch of Class!'"

JIMMY HANLON, ex-comic of the Empire Musical Stock Company, leaped lightly up the steps of the frowning building which squatted on Broadway and announced to the world that it housed the executive offices of the National Amusement Company, Inc. The National owned and operated a "Wheel" of over forty burlesque shows. They owned or leased theatres in all the principal Eastern cities, sending their shows over a regular circuit yearly. In former days, before he had gone to the mat with one J. Barleycorn, Hanlon had been accustomed to being thought of as one of the Wheel's most promising young comedians. Often in the last few months he had thought longingly of the days with the old "Twenty Tamales" show, but now he looked with indulgent contempt on the pictures of various Wheel stars that decorated the reception room of the National offices. Jimmy was nattily attired in a brown suit which a tasteful salesman had succeeded in getting him to take in preference to a louder pattern. His derby hat was set at just a wee angle on his head—an angle which subtly expressed his ebullience. His glossy tan shoes twinkled blithesomely, and from his cane to his cigar he radiated the confidence that overflowed within him. He was glad to be in New York again, glad he was shooting for the big time, glad he was going to see Abie again.

"Abie" was now Mr. A. David Goodman. Abie was the former manager of the "Twenty Tamales;" A. David Goodman was the assistant general manager of the National Amusement Company, Inc.

"Tell Mr. Goodman that Jimmy Hanlon is awaitin' the excrutiatin' pleasure of an interview, sister," he told the enquiring girl. "And please pick up them number threes of yours and set 'em down fast, because I'm all set to make my entrance right now!"

The million-dollar blonde melted before the sunniness of his smile. This tall fellow with the lopsided grin appeared so sure of himself that she forgot to ask him what his business was, and instead found herself going down the corridor with a celerity which even the impatient Jimmy found satisfactory.

"Go right in. Sixth door down on the right," she announced a few seconds later.

"Everything comin' my way," Jimmy congratulated himself. "I bet Abe'll be glad to see me, at that."

"How's everything, Jimmy?" enquired the slender little man who met him at the door and shook hands warmly. "It's good to lamp you again."

"Same here, Abie!" Hanlon looked down at the little Jew affectionately. "As to my condition, I got a bug in my bean and I'm ready to stop vampin' and follow my hunch. In fact, I'm followin' it right now."

"Have a chair, Jimmy, and let's hear it."

The nervous Goodman bustled behind his desk, produced a box of cigars, passed it to Hanlon, selected a weed and had it burning nicely in close to four sec-

onds, all the while darting keen glances at the big fellow before him.

"What have you been doing, Jim? I sort of lost sight of you after you took the wrong time to get drunk and Reynolds caught you."

He watched Hanlon speculatively, drumming nervously on his desk as he saw traces of embarrassment appear for the first time.

"I went downhill pretty fast for a while, Abe," admitted Jimmy. "Finally ended up doin' Hickey for a stock company down south. Then I met the neatest, smoothest, classiest little girl in the business, and—you know how it is. I been off the booze for seven months, and now she's up here with me and we're yearnin' for the big time. What it takes to make it, we got, too!"

"That's a sizeable yearn you got," said Abe. "What is your act?"

"Singin', dancin' and talkin'. We got a routine of talk that'll knock 'em off their seats and tie 'em in knots. You know—built for the best houses, quiet and nifty with no crude stuff. I got a good comedy song, and we got the rest picked yesterday down to Bernsteins. We've sunk our wad on some real clothes, and we're set!"

"Who's your agent?"

Abe was persistently avoiding Hanlon's gaze, now, and the latter waited in vain for some expression of good will from the forceful little man before him.

"That's somethin' I wanted to see you about. You know all these New York birds, and I want you to steer me up against a live wire that can handle an act right and get it what it's worth."

"I see. Think you're ripe for the big houses, eh?"

"I know it, Abe. I got it figured right. What they want nowadays is quiet, clean, and real nifty, with class written all over it. The rough stuff don't get you nowhere. I'm off it. Believe me, we'll give 'em what they want. You oughta see Lottie work, Abe! She can put over a genteel jazz song and dance so there won't a pair of eyes even wink in the house. Drop around to the hotel and look her over, old-timer! She's there a million. And we're sick of the rough stuff; it's us for the highbrow now!"

His enthusiasm did not seem to be infectious. The burlesque man was smoking in rapid puffs, and his steady stare at the ceiling seemed to be for evasive purposes.

"What's the matter, Abe? You don't seem to be fallin' over yourself with joy at my news," observed Jimmy finally.

"Well, boy, I'll tell you," replied Goodman. "I ain't sayin' you won't make good up there, because maybe you will. I haven't seen your act, but you're going up against the best in the business, and they've been doing what you're going to try ever since you started in on the low comedy line. You're an A-I man in your place, Jim, but you're line ain't looking and acting like a lounge lizard and hoofing away on the imitation ballroom style. What you're going to try to put over isn't put in you by Wheel shows and cheap musical stock companies; it's something that's got to be born in you or got by practice. The minute a roughneck starts pulling highbrow stuff its a dead give away from the jump."

"I know Abe, but—"

"I'm not saying that there aren't a lot of show people getting away with it, because they are. But they're not fooling anybody the way they think they are. If a man is good the house will let him talk counterfeit Boston if he wants to, but only so long as he can still hit that top note or do the Russian knee stepping. But you can't jump into it, Jim, and it takes a different crowd than the Tamales to polish you off. If you and me were to horn in on the real aristocratic bunch or try to copy 'em we'd just be pulling high-class comedy. Why not stick where you belong, and where you're good? If

that's straight about the booze, Meyer's Whirl show is rehearsing down at Pratt Hall and they need a comedian bad. Grogan ran out on 'em yesterday. We can fix up the little girl, too, and—"

"Nothin' doin', Abe, thanks just the same," answered Jimmy, his disappointment over his friend's attitude somewhat appeased by the offer of an engagement. "Hanlon and Harkness are gonna make the time, and when they get a little wad and produce a little something in the way of special drops and stuff they're gonna be flirtin' with Broadway for something permanent."

"I'm pulling for you, Jim, but I don't know. There's thousands of people been playing the three and four-a-days half their life that are feeling for the big stuff all the while. But let that rest. If the old National Wheel doesn't hold any temptation, why the man for you is Bernie Samson. If anybody can put you over for the two-a-day, he can."

"Bernie Samson? Is he the guy that handled the Chicago end of the Wheel in the old days?"

"He's the boy. He quit the Wheel three years ago, a little after you quit by request, and since then he's been doing everything from publishing songs to backing shows. Everything he touched left a little more mazuma sticking to his fingers. Now he's a 'new agent for new acts,' according to the ads he spreads all over the show business. He's raking up talent from everywhere and putting them over for a pretty fair average, too. He's got the best act-doctor in the business along with him, and after Freeman gets 'em in shape Bernie sees to it that they—and their agent—get all its worth or more. He books on the big time with the United Exchange, so he can put you anywhere your work warrants. But you'd better think twice before you turn down my proposition, Jimmy. We'd like mighty well to have you—"

"Big time or bust, big boy!" was the confident response. "I'm layin' off the big nose and them falls you used to like so well, and layin' 'em down to let 'em rest a long time, too. How about a letter to Samson, Abe? He might remember me, at that."

"Drop in about two, Jimmy, and it'll be ready. If Bernie can't help you, nobody can. But there's nobody can make a silk pocketbook out of a pig's ear, as the fellow says, and it's a shame to spoil a good nut comedian and turn out a second rate song and dance bird!"

Hanlon, despite momentary twinges of uneasiness at the judgment of the wily Goodman, went back to tell Lottie in a persistently optimistic mood. He found her gazing raptly at two evening gowns and a cloak which they had purchased the day before. Her face was flushed and smiling, and he took the opportunity to imprint a resounding kiss on the smiling lips she held up to him invitingly.

"Sweetheart, we gotta polish off the edges quick, now!" he told her gaily. "I got a letter to the livest agent on the big street comin' this P. M., so you want to learn how to wear them dresses and get in and out of 'em fast. We're liable to be showin' this time to-morrow!"

He threw his hat on the table and returned for another quick caress. The feeling between these two waifs of the show world had ripened into steadfast love on Lottie's part during the last two weeks. Jimmy's boyishness, which had persisted through all the vicissitudes of his checkered career, was the cloak for as simple and kindly a heart as ever beat. His devotion and delicate attentiveness had never wavered, and his infectious optimism had finally aroused an almost equally enthusiastic response in the more timid Lottie.

As they ate lunch in the dining room of the small theatrical hotel they put their heads together and went over for the thousandth time bits of stage business and other details of the act that was to make Hanlon and Harkness big timers. Jimmy left for Goodman's office

with the comfortable feeling of one who has left no stone unturned.

With the letter in his pocket, he started for the sanctum of the "new agent for new acts." He found a sleek, baby-skinned man, whose cupids-bow mouth, small enough for a girl, was in ludicrous contrast to the receding terraces of his chins. His blonde hair was growing thin on top. A pair of remarkably large and cold gray eyes surveyed the jaunty Hanlon without a flicker of expression.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Hanlon?" he asked, remaining immovable behind the massive desk. This mammoth, flat-topped affair took almost half the space in the small, severely plain office.

"Read this letter, first," was the untroubled reply.

Samson took the letter held out to him without a word and read it through with his face resembling that of a veteran poker player surveying an ace-full.

"If you can deliver, we shall be glad to handle you," he stated as he finished the letter, giving Hanlon another quick look from those steely eyes. He pressed a button, and a young fellow from the outer office appeared as though by magic.

"Take Mr. Hanlon's name, address and telephone number," the agent ordered, "and show him to Mr. Freeman's office. Mr. Freeman will see your act, Mr. Hanlon, ascertain its possibilities and make any suggestions necessary if it proves to be the kind that we can handle. Should we decide to do business with you, we will notify you and the contract can be drawn immediately."

"Right-o," agreed Jimmy, somewhat impressed by the smooth, effortless way in which Samson did business of such import in so short a time.

He found time to wonder, as the clerk was taking the information needed, what sort of man Freeman, the famous act-doctor, might be. An act-doctor is a man whose business it is to strengthen and polish off vaudeville productions with faults that need correcting. Many a headliner whose bits of business are known from coast to coast can thank an unnamed act-doctor for the ideas that made them. Of all these men, who are called in constantly to tinker with acts, Freeman was the best known and most successful. Samson had done a keen piece of business in attaching him at a satisfactory salary, for as the wise ones along Broadway expressed it, "Snap" Freeman could take a street-cleaner and a policeman, work on them one morning, and put them next to closing at the Palace for a comedy riot!

Freeman was busy at the telephone, and Jimmy had a good chance to get a look at the man on whom depended his vaudeville fortunes. He was a tall, lank individual, with graying hair worn in a stiff brush pompadour. He was clean-shaven, his face showing deep-creased, sardonic lines.

He had evidently been talking to his chief, for he turned to his visitor with a quick, "Sit down, Hanlon. Get out, you!" to the youthful clerk.

"Now what have you done, what do you want to do, and what have you got to do it with?" he enquired in staccato phrases which accounted for his Broadway cognomen, "Snap."

Hanlon told him as briefly as possible, laying stress on his favorite topic these days—what he continually called the "class" and the "niftiness" of the act that Hanlon and Harkness were to do.

"Are you ready to show?" enquired Freeman as though he was accusing Jimmy of murder in the first degree.

"Right now!"

"Be at Culver Hall in the morning. Eleven sharp. Costumes, everything. Stage door at the back will be open. Got it? Eleven on the dot!"

"We'll be there!"

In another minute Hanlon was on his way back to Lottie, his head in the clouds and his feet treading air.

"How easy, how easy!" he murmured to himself jubilantly. "And boy, oh boy,

how those guys do business! Maybe we didn't get a bunch of live wires for ours!"

The next morning Hanlon and Harkness were at Culver Hall, the time being precisely ten-fifty A. M. Directly after them came the lathelike figure of Freeman, meticulously clad, a long cane describing jerky evolutions in time with his long stride. With him was a pasty faced, thin chested young man who traveled at a half run to keep up with his companion.

"Morning!" grunted the act-doctor, paying Lottie the compliment of a second glance. "Give Izzy your music, find yourselves dressing rooms, tog out and make it as fast as the good Lord'll let you."

The languid pianist deigned to give the music a casual glance, and then resumed his listless pose on the stool, exhaling tremendous clouds of cigarette smoke. He had ruined four fresh ones before Lottie and Hanlon returned, Lottie looking her charming best in a pink evening gown of some filmy stuff. Jimmy looked and acted a trifle uncomfortable in his brand new evening clothes.

"All right, give Izzy your music cues, and let's go," directed Freeman, coiling himself in a seat well toward the back of the hall.

There he sat immovably for the next twenty minutes, his hat well down over his eyes and a short black pipe between his lips, unlit. He made no comment as Lottie and Jimmy went through their act, although at times he appeared to be on the point of leaping from his seat and tearing for the stage.

As the aspirants for big time danced off and the pianist struck the last mechanical note, the lank figure bounded down the aisle in great strides.

"Hanlon, you were a burlesque comedian headed for the top, they tell me. Why didn't you stick to it?" he demanded, glaring at the perspiring and nonplussed actor accusingly. "Your act is like a thousand that are decorating the four-a-day from Portland to Portland. Get me? There's nothing new in it, and when there isn't anything new the old stuff has got to be done so smooth that no one will know or care whether it's been done before or not. You're both stiff, affected, and you couldn't get a gag over in a year with that cross between a shop girl's idea of highbrow conversation and a Fifth Avenue dame's idea of slang. Miss Harkness, here, is long on appearance and her stuff may get by on looks. Her single song and dance and your comedy song are the only bright places there are, and they're bright because you got working the way you're accustomed to when you did 'em. You forgot that imitation class stuff that you don't know how to do, and got almost natural and easy for a minute. You won't do for the big time. What you need is a season in the small time family theatres, some new material, and some experience wearing a dress suit. I think you got the stuff to make the customers like you, and I know the girl has. But nothing will do it but a complete change of act, or experience; and I don't know which will do the most good."

"But listen," pleaded Hanlon, "this is our first showin' and we ain't broke in yet. Give us a week and we'll be sure of ourselves and have this stuff and the way to handle it down pat. We'll—"

"Those two signs of life you showed are all that makes me bother a second time. We'll doctor up the next two days, and then book you in for a split week in a movie house on Long Island somewhere. If you're not right then, it's good-bye for the big time with this act, anyway. You don't fit, though. You look like acrobats trying to do a sketch. But we'll see. Nine o'clock to-morrow morning. S'long."

He departed swiftly with the bored pianist in his wake, while the subdued and worried vaudeville aspirants slowly drifted toward their dressing rooms.

"Don't you worry, honey," comforted Hanlon as they made their way slowly toward their hotel. "These birds always say you're no good. Would he be bothin' with us if we wasn't? I ask you, now, would he? I'll say not. And believe me, a little experience and we'll show 'em. What it takes, we got. If we haven't, we'll get it!"

The rest of the way home, while they were having lunch, and later in Lottie's room they dissected, discussed, added to and cut from their cherished routine. They argued over trivial bits and fought over important ones. Finally Lottie leaned back, stretched mightily and sighed.

"So help me, if I hear another word of that act again to-day I'm goin' bugs! I don't care what Freeman or anyone else thinks about it, or whether I ever play it or not. Let's go to a matinee, Jimmy, and forget it!"

"Right you are, sweetheart," was the remorseful answer. "Ain't I been a pretty guy, now, coopin' you up and howlin' at you all the time. We'll drop in at the—"

The telephone drowned his words in a furious burst of ringing.

"Hello? Yes, this is Hanlon."

The waiting Lottie could hear a steady, excited hum of conversation coming over the transmitter. Jimmy's face was a study. His expression ran the gamut of surprise, unbelief, amazement, and finally almost delirious joy.

"You bet we'll do it! An' say—"

The machine gun fire of words began again, ending with a sharp click as the receiver on the other end was hung up. Jimmy turned to Lottie, his eyes blazing with excitement.

"We're goin' on at the Tenth Avenue this afternoon, Lottie! We're number two on the bill, and the show starts in just one hour. Get your duds and makeup box, and lets go!"

He tore out of the door toward his own room, leaving his partner speechless and paralyzed. Going on this afternoon? Where? Why? Suddenly realizing the need for haste, she leaped for the closet and began cramming the carefully hung stage gowns into her suitcase.

"Let's go right now, honey!"

Jimmy grabbed the big suitcase, which with his own and his makeup box made a sizeable load, and led the way down the corridor as though the hotel was on fire.

"That was Freeman," he told her excitedly as they sped toward the theatre in a taxicab. "The number two act at the Tenth Avenue sent around word a half hour ago that they couldn't play, and we're it!"

"But how did Freeman happen to—"

"Couldn't get another act for love nor money. Only ones possible was bigheaded, Freeman says, and wouldn't go on number two in a show for anybody. They had to have some one to work in one so's they could shift the scenery for a fullstage act on third, and we was the only ones they could reach. Freeman says there ain't a chance of gettin' by, but that just proves that a good man can go wrong!"

The gaunt agent arrived in a rush just as the two finished a hasty rehearsal of their music with the bored orchestra.

"How in the name of St. George of Baluchistan you two are going to stay out your time I don't know," he told them cheerily, "but it can't do any harm, I guess. Bill here," turning to the quite house manager, "knows the circumstances so you won't lose anything no matter how bad you flop. If you escape getting booed off the stage, that's all we can expect. For the love of Mike, get some of the starch out of your backbones, forget that posing, don't talk like a Boston bean and plug your two single songs for all they're worth!"

He turned on his heel and strode off to get an advantageous seat to "watch the slaughter," as he privately remarked to the house manager.

The Tenth Avenue, although what is

known as a "big time" house, played acts only three days, having two bills a week. It was a favorite house to try out new acts which were considered strong possibilities for the highest class—big time or two-a-day, in stage parlance—vaudeville. It had a peculiar clientele. Its patrons were educated to the best grade of vaudeville, at a considerably lower admission scale than prevailed uptown, and it boasted of a group of gallery gods who were critics. If they liked an act, agents used to say, that act was over. If they didn't, almost anything was likely to happen.

Luckily for them, Lottie and her partner did not know this, or they might have been considerably more nervous than they were, and that was nervous enough, especially the Harkness half of the team.

"Don't be scared, Miss Harkness," comforted the manager, seeing her frightened expression. "You two will get by all right, and when you come back here, as you probably will, for your real tryout it will be a lot easier. The way you look in that dress alone is worth a round of applause."

He was a kindly man, was the house manager, and he had a daughter of his own who expected to have her tryout in vaudeville soon. Lottie flushed at the cheering words, and Hanlon threw a look of mute gratitude to him.

The tramp juggler who opened the show took two bows and came off wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"Good bunch out there this afternoon," he remarked casually as he passed.

"Now we're off, honey. Let's knock 'em off their seats!" whispered Hanlon as the first bars of their opening song came from the orchestra, and as though in a trance Lottie obediently half danced, half walked into the glare of the footlights, mechanically turning toward the blurred faces in front with her brilliant smile. The slim, girlish figure in the attractive gown made even the caustic Freeman mutter to himself in surprise.

Hanlon followed her on, a few steps behind, and the two swung into a conventional double number. Freeman writhed in his seat as he watched the affected mannerisms and stilted attitudes which spoiled the team's excellent first impression. Hanlon and Lottie, growing in confidence before the familiar lights, worked their hardest. They finished with a deep bow, and immediately began the little double dance that followed the song. Again they appeared out of their element. The dance lost what grace it had originally possessed through their efforts to pose. They danced off to a barely audible patter of applause.

"Don't worry, we're gettin' 'em," whispered Jimmy, manfully hiding his sinking disappointment at their reception. Quickly Lottie donned her evening cape and adjusted the chic hat to match. She pattered swiftly out from the wings, Hanlon following. They began their flirtation chatter with exaggerated care as to pronunciation and correctness. One or two of the points got over mildly, but in the main their talk was received in blank silence.

To three people at least, and apparently to about twelve hundred more, it seemed as though the talking would never be over. Finally Hanlon exited, after the last of what he had fondly believed would be a series of "gags" that would make the routine one continuous chuckle. For once in his life the big fellow was beaten, and it seemed to him that he had never known such a sensation of utter, blasting defeat.

In his despair a wild thought came to his mind and he rushed toward the steps that led to his dressing room.

Lottie, working desperately, and forgetting momentarily her much practiced posing, did fairly well with her song. Her dance was even better, and she closed to applause that was far from heavy, but infinitely heartening after the reception which had been accorded their previous efforts.

As she exited on the other side of the stage Hanlon shot past the manager and out before the audience. A spontaneous roar of laughter shook the house. Instead of the foppish actor they had looked at before, an impudent, mirth-inspiring countenance gazed at them with an expression of childlike wonder. Eyebrows and mouth were peaked and pinched, and from the center of the face projected that bulbous, depraved looking nose that the patrons of the Empire Musical Stock Company loved so well. A ridiculous derby hat decorated the exact center of his head. He stumbled and did one of the deceitfully easy looking falls that years of practice had made possible. The house woke up with a vengance. As Jimmy came up leaning backwards and said wistfully: "I—I feel so l-o-o-se," they almost cried.

Freeman was like a man turned to stone as he watched Jimmy's shambling, stumbling progress to the center of the stage. His correct evening dress made the contrast all the funnier, and every step of his progress was marked by shrieks of laughter. His final fall brought him easily to his feet in front of the piano in the orchestra pit. With exaggerated care he carefully took a run and leaped the tiny crack between it and the stage, and swung into his comedy song, from his post on top of the piano.

What had been a really good number became a riot as Hanlon, now Hickey come to life, did it. Before the heart-warming applause had died he started his old eccentric dance. He tripped, stumbled, ran into the proscenium and rebounded in a series of headstands, and did everything else he knew. His flat footed, awkward stepping was screamingly funny, and he took bumps that produced black and blue spots with a delighted smile. He never lost that pleading, wondering look that had endeared Hickey to thousands of burlesque patrons, and the big time crowd, in the vernacular of the stage, "ate it up."

Jimmy worked as though inspired. That the orchestra was still sawing away on the tune of his song did not bother him in the least. Would Lottie take the cue, he wondered as he darted a quick glance toward the wings. There, sure enough, was Lottie. Instead of her other new gown she had on her natty street suit, but the rakish little hat was pulled down on the side of her head, and her jaws began to work as though a dollar's worth of gum was between them.

Hanlon stopped in a grotesque attitude, facing the wings, as Lottie strutted out with exaggerated toughness.

"The old dance!" he whispered fiercely. For the next minute he swung her about the way he had done week after week before, falling around her, in front of her, anywhere. Only once did he turn to the laughing house to say appealingly: "I feel so l-o-o-se!" and again a roar of mirth was his reward.

He exited after receiving a push from Lottie, in a series of rapid back steps, leaning further and further backwards as though about to fall. Lottie followed him off with her funny little swagger, darting the audience a triumphant look under the tilted hat brim.

After their third bow had been made to the enthusiastic audience, Freeman appeared, his eyes blazing wrathfully.

"If you two ever try to do anything but nut stuff from now on you ought to be made guests of the State! Your stuff was so crude it was pitiful, but those falls can be made into an act that'll take you over the route, with the girl's singing. Culver Hall, nine sharp!"

"Did—did we really get over?" asked Lottie as though she doubted the evidence of her senses. "And oh, Jimmy, how did you ever happen to come out as Hickey?"

"If what you have don't suit 'em, change your line," replied Hanlon, as they fled for the dressing rooms. "Class will tell, girlie, class will tell!"

THE POSTERISTIC TEMPERAMENT

By G. B. WIMSATT

HEN it is written that Bill had temperament and yet held a good job as bill-poster, it will at once be understood that Bill had also sobriety, industry, honesty, an engaging personality, and some pull with the manager. Bill was an inspired artist in the arrangement of signs and posters, and delighted in designing billboards that were not only zoologically harmonious, but also consistent as to sense.

He did not confront the black pussy of "Cat's-Paw" with the ferocious brindle bull of "Bulldog Polish," or perch "Red Raven Spilts" beside "Robin's Egg Blueing," or feature "Anti-fat" and "Sanatogen" on the same fence, or follow "Hunter's Rye Whiskey" with "The Curse of Drink." But inspiration is not what a company pays its bill-posters for; its workings are adjusted to mediocrity, and excellence throws it out of gear; and therefore, Bill's company almost parted with him when a delegation from a booming suburb represented that a conspicuous signboard fronting their main thoroughfare had greeted all comers with "Settle in Oaklawn!" "Take Zeff for Chills!" "Doctor Kilmer's Swamproot Cures Malaria"; "Insure Your Life with the Prudential"; "Smith's Funerals are Cheap"; "Family Lots, or Single Graves in Oaklawn Cemetery at Attractive Prices."

To this charge, Bill had responded that experienced men were always allowed some latitude in placing their posters, and that as the board in question was painted black, he had posted it with the most appropriate signs, and had reserved "Gaiety Burlesquers" and "Aunt Jemima's" for fences farther on, where they would strike no discordant note. Bill conveyed the impression that the citizens of Oaklawn were lacking in appreciation for the higher kind of bill-posting.

However, as Bill's manager needed men just then, and as he owned no property in Oaklawn, he had chosen to regard the ominous board rather as an exuberance of temperament than as a manifestation of perverted humor, and had not divorced Bill from his paste bucket and posters.

"I can't help it, boss," said Bill. "When I'm sad I can't put up anything but the doleful sheets, and when I'm feeling good I can't post the 'Merry Maidens' and 'Sunny Jims' fast enough."

"You've got the posteristic temperament, Bill," said the manager. "Hold it under, or you'll lose your job."

But on this Monday afternoon, Bill's temperament ached to voice the gloom of his soul, and no warning could have stayed him as he approached the new board fence that awaited his touch to blossom into glory. Had Bill been a musician, he would have composed a "Kreutzer Sonata"; had he been an artist he would have produced a "Melancholia," but being only a bill-poster, he selected from his roll of sheets seven dark and depressing placards bearing the words "Blue Monday," strung them the length of the fence, with no information regarding the laundry soap that would change

the complexion of the day, which properly should have followed them; then, to get as far as possible from an unsympathetic world, he climbed the little stepladder placed exactly in front of the middle sign, humped himself in the attitude of a sick crow, and reveled in his misery.

Mamie did not love him; Mamie did not like him; Mamie positively hated him—at least such were the unconcealed sentiments of Mamie's mother, and Mamie had made no sign that she did not share these views. For three successive Monday nights, Bill had called on Mamie, and incidentally and undesignedly, on Mamie's mother, who had seemed not unappreciative of his drollery, when he had inquired for Mamie in the classic phrase, " 'Have you a little fairy in your home,' Mrs. Malone?" But now he must break the pleasant sequence, for Mrs. Malone, having come upon him as he was posting a board wth advertisements of "Orangeade" and "Orange Groves in Florida," had conceived the deadly suspicion that he was an Orangeman, and despite his frenzied protests, had indignantly informed him that her doors would be closed to him Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and especially Mondays. Oh, it was seven times blue Monday for poor Bill, and no power on earth could have kept him from proclaiming it.

Bill knew that before long, Mamie, who was saleslady at the glove counter, would pass on her way from the store where she worked; he feared she would be accompanied by Archie Exline, the floor-walker; and he hoped she would read the meaning in the words beyond his drooping form, and cast him a pitying glance. He considered the advisability of attempting the downfall of Archie by sending a trickle of slippery paste across the pavement, but remembering that Mamie, too, would have to cross the snare, he relinquished the bright plan and waited.

Before the paste on the placards was dry, Bill, looking up the street, glimpsed the feather on Mamie's hat just in time to sink back into the wilted pose which had been temporarily disturbed by a yawn. Though his jealousy had prophesied it, Bill's heart sank as he saw Archie strolling beside her, and he regretted that he had had another thought about the paste.

"Well, he asked me to fit them on him, and ain't it my business to try gloves on customers when they ask me? No, I didn't take any longer than if it had been a lady—well, not much longer, anyhow. I hope, Mr. Exline, you are not growling because I try to please a customer." This was the conversation that drifted up to Bill, as Mamie, usually so alert and observant of everything, held Archie in an absorbing dispute and passed on without a glance at the figure of woe, or the telltale signs beyond it.

When she had turned the corner, Bill came slowly down from his perch; he looked in his roll for more "Blue Mondays," but finding none, sighed and remarked, "Well, even 'Rough-on-Rats' wouldn't express it," folded the stepladder, took his brush from the bucket, and prepared to move on.

"Hi, Bill! Wait, Bill! Did you think I didn't see you?" panted Mamie, whisking furtively around the corner. "I had to do it, Bill, for I knew Archie would tell Ma if I spoke to you, and she has such a grouch against you, I wanted to give her time to simmer down before you came around again. Archie? Oh, I just keep Archie around to distract Ma's attention. There's nothing doing there but a bluff. I shunted him at the gate and sneaked back to tell you. What are you up to, Bill? Going back to work? Well, I like that—I don't think! So long!"

"Aw, Mame, don't you see what it is?" protested Bill, as he unrolled the seven "Sunny Monday" sequels to the "Blue Monday" signs. "I make the old posters

say what I feel. That"—pointing to the "Blue Mondays"—"is how it seemed to me when I thought you had gone back on me; and this"—posting the second signs over the first—"is the way it seems now. Mame, I'm coming around this evening. Will you be out front?"

"Well, you are the funny fellow, Bill," giggled Mamie, blushing as she studied the signs. "Yes, I'll be there, but unless Ma is in the parlor chinning to the policeman, she will be sure to make a fuss. Well, if you want to take a chance, Bill—"

"Mamie, I'd take a chance if she was my own landlady and I hadn't paid my board! Oh, skip, Mame! Here she comes around the corner!"

"Was that the skirt-tails of my Mamie I saw frisking around the corner, Bill Brown?" demanded Mrs. Malone, puffing up to the radiant Bill.

Bill's brush continued to caress the "Sunny Mondays" as Bill, in words as smooth as the paste in his bucket, assured Mrs. Malone that her daughter, escorted by Mr. Exline, had passed down the street fifteen minutes before, but had not stopped to speak to him. If Mrs. Malone did not believe him, she could ask Mr. Exline.

"It's well for her she didn't, Bill Brown," declared Mrs. Malone. "My Mamie is too young to know her own mind, but her mother isn't! That Archie Exline is no Orangeman! He's a gentleman, he is, not a common workman, and Mamie could live like a lady if she married him, and would thank her old mother for guiding her. Keep away if you want to keep out of trouble, young man." Mrs. Malone departed haughtily, only pausing to remark significantly, "And my gentleman friend is the policeman on the beat."

That evening, as Bill approached Mrs. Malone's dwelling, the warning in her parting words still lingered in his mind and he peered ahead for the threatened trouble. But it was not the apprehended evil that loomed before him. "Archie!" muttered Bill, as he watched a figure turn in at the gate and seat itself beside the figure on the bench before the door. "Mame didn't invite him here this evening. He's butting in!" continued Bill resentfully, as, stooping, he picked up a small stone and embedded it in the stiff little bouquet he held behind his back.

As he drew nearer, Bill noticed that the bench on which Mamie and Archie sat seemed as though, by some invisible agency, it were being slowly tilted at one end and letting Archie slide down toward the other, where Mamie was taking up as little space as possible.

"Lots of room on that bench for one more," called Bill, as he fumbled with the catch on the gate.

"Not enough for a sticky bill-poster!" responded the gentlemanly Archie.

"Biff!"

"Help! Help! He has murdered me! Mr. Flynn! Mr. Flynn!" shouted Archie, doubled over and clasping himself fondly around the waist.

"Scoot, Bill!" shrieked Mamie. But it was too late, for Policeman Flynn, eager to prove himself a man of power in the eyes of Mrs. Malone, who hurried from the parlor at his heels, already had the ill-advised Bill in his grasp. "Shut up, Archie! No, Ma, Bill didn't touch him; he didn't do anything but throw a bunch of geraniums at the old sissy for a joke!"

"Gee-raniums!" murmured Archie.

"Oh, why did you try to be funny, Bill? Ma, stop fussing over Archie; he's just pretending to be hurt to make trouble for poor Bill! What's a bunch of flowers! Actresses have bouquets thrown at them all the time and they don't mind! Oh, everybody's down on Bill!" wailed Mamie, and overcome by grief at the injustice of the world, she fled into the house.

Mrs. Malone shut the front door after her daughter and appealed to the law. "It's well we poor weak women have someone to protect us, Mr. Flynn. This

Bill Brown is a dangerous character and has pestered me to death making eyes at my Mamie. Lock him up, Mr. Flynn, and it's a good job you'll be doing."

"Be calm, madam. I'll deal with him," replied Flynn pompously. "He wouldn't get anything but a light fine for hitting a man with a bunch of posies, but I'll keep him out of your way, never fear."

Dragging Bill by the collar and followed by Mrs. Malone, and at a safer distance by the still dazed Mr. Exline, Flynn made his way to the corner. Taking a piece of chalk from his pocket, he drew a line from one side of the street to the other. "Do you see that line?" he inquired. "There will be another just like it at the other end of the street. See that you keep on the outside of them, for if I catch you on Marshall Street, between Green and Locust, I'll have you up as a suspicious character. You're warned. Now git!" And Policeman Flynn pushed Bill across the line and grinned.

Across the chalk line that marked for him the boundaries of Paradise, Bill addressed himself to Mrs. Malone. "Mrs. Malone, ma'am, far be it from me to contend with a lady, and so I'm glad it's a man I have against me now. There's no policeman living that can keep me from saying what I want to say to Miss Mamie. Why, Mrs. Malone, I could propose to her right under his eyes and he wouldn't know it! And I'll do it, too, Mrs. Malone, ma'am!"

"Hear the fellow boast!" jibed Mrs. Malone. "Let me see you so much as pass the time of day to Mamie when Mr. Flynn is around and I'll give my consent and dance at your wedding!"

"Will you, truly, Mrs. Malone? Will you? Will you?"

"Yes, and I'm safe enough in saying it," replied Mrs. Malone scornfully. "Ain't I, Mr. Flynn?"

"That you are," answered Flynn, under her trusting gaze. "Move on! Move on!" he blustered proudly, though Bill, having sent his challenge, was already gone.

But around the corner, screened from the eyes of his persecutors, all Bill's proud bearing left him, and as he slunk toward his home, properly woebegone, as becomes one who has vaunted vainglorioously, he murmured to himself, "And yesterday I laughed when I posted up that revivalist's sign, 'Hell is upon you!'"

"Brown," said the manager, a week later, "if you can come out of your trance long enough, take these posters and paste the new signboard we have put up on Marshall Street, near the corner of Locust. Make a neat job of it, for that board can be seen from the cars."

"Marshall Street! Near the corner of Locust! Do you mean it, Mr. Greeg? Oh, by the Gold-dust Twins, it's too good to be true! Gimme those posters! Hooray, hooray!"

"It's his temperament loose again," sighed the manager, as Bill sped through the door. "I wish I had someone else to put on the job."

Could the manager have seen how gaily Bill approached the new board on Marshall Street, near the corner of Locust, directly opposite Mrs. Malone's, he might well have felt uneasy. Bill gazed fondly at the bright blank space, and with a fatuous smile patted the posters designed for its adornment.

Across the street from the new billboard and the ardent worker, sat Mrs. Malone and Mr. Flynn, discussing the weather, and quite unconscious that the wicked old bench had been up to its tilting tricks again and settled them close together at the more sheltered end. As Bill set up his little stepladder with a frank clatter, Mrs. Malone looked up, and with an exclamation of surprise, dug her elbow into the ribs of the unwary Flynn. "Well, if there ain't Bill Brown flourishing himself right under our eyes! The cheek of him! I'm glad Mamie is upstairs taking her nap, but it will do

no harm for me to run up and listen at her door and make sure all is quiet, while you go over and arrest him, Mr. Flynn. Come back when you have locked him up and try some of that home-made wine I put up the year poor Timothy died. Ah, it's twelve long years it's been—"

Mrs. Malone bustled indoors and in a few minutes bustled out again, meeting Officer Flynn at the door.

"Have you arrested him so soon?" she asked.

"No; there he is still," answered Flynn. "He swears it's a piece of work that's been assigned to him, and I can't very well arrest a man when he's only doing his work. But he can't play any tricks on me, Mrs. Malone. He won't be long on that job, so bring out that grape-juice you was telling me about, and I'll sit here and keep an eye on him."

"Fine!" agreed Mrs. Malone. "As we know Mamie is safe asleep upstairs, we can sit at our ease and laugh at the rascal."

When Mrs. Malone brought out the home-made wine and set it on the bench between them, it was surprising how steadily the bench behaved, not once tilting itself in its usual manner. "It must be thirsty work, posting," commented Mrs. Malone with malicious satisfaction, as she filled Flynn's glass.

"It's the grand grape-juice you make, Mrs. Malone," complimented Flynn. "I don't care how long it takes to post those signs."

"I'm glad Mamie is sound asleep up there," Mrs. Malone felicitated herself, while Mamie, aroused possibly by some watchful cupid, or perhaps by the click of glasses, stood in the upper window, casting on the couple below glances of amusement and contempt.

On the other side of the street, Bill stirred his paste and appeared oblivious to all but his work. Only once did he dare look toward the upper window and catch the eyes that watched him above the heads of the unconscious couple on the bench; then with a little nod toward the board, he started to work. Very deliberately, he spread out his roll of posters and with inspiration in his eyes, sorted and selected until he had eliminated all but nine sheets. Pushing aside the discard with his feet, and grasping his brush like a lance set for the tilt, Bill advanced to the board clasping to his breast nine placards, which celebrated a toilet soap, a cracker, a ladies' journal, a scouring powder, and island adjoining Cuba, an after-dinner confection, a shaving stick, and a shoe polish. With a flourish, he raised the tidings of "Sweetheart Soap" on his brush, and affixed it in the upper left-hand corner of the board; then, with "Uneeda Biscuit," he covered the word "Soap" in the first advertisement, and exalted a "Woman's Home Companion" in its entirety, taking care that it overlapped "Biscuits." Next, he featured the "Old Dutch Cleanser" caption, "Try Me," on a new line, and beneath it, paragraphed the "Isle of Pines," the last word of which was blotted out by the "U" from the "U-All-No" mints, and stepped back to view the effect. In glaring ill-assorted letters, the message on the board stood out for Mamie and all the rest of the world, to read:

SWEETHEART—UNEEDA—WOMAN'S
HOME COMPANION
TRY ME
ISLE OF-U. (I love you.)

With the help of the name of Mr. Williams who made shaving sticks, and Mr. Brown who made dressing for ladies' shoes, Bill signed his declaration of love, and blushed as he looked up to the window across the way.

"The boy must be drunk, Mr. Flynn!" exulted Mrs. Malone. "Look how crazy he has posted those signs!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Flynn. "'Tis funny to see a drunken man! But no bill-poster, drunk or sober, can get ahead of Policeman Flynn. Not a word has

he had with Mamie, and now that he finds he is beaten, I'll bet he makes himself scarce around here. A little more of that fine grape-juice, if you please, Mrs. Malone."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mamie, above the heads of the startled pair. "Read that sign, Mr. Flynn! Read it, Ma! Hasn't Bill done what he said he would do? Right under Mr. Flynn's eyes he has proposed! There, I knew you would see the joke. It's all right now and I'm coming down—"

"Tee-hee, tee-hee-hee-hee!" gasped Mamie's mother. "Oh, I love a joke, even when it's on me. That boy's no Orangeman, Mamie. No Orangeman could get ahead of me like that! Call him over, Mamie, and we will all celebrate the joke with another bottle of my home-made wine. No, I don't mean 'engagement,' either. There's many an engagement but few enough jokes like this of Bill's."

"A bright boy like that should be on the force," grudged Policeman Flynn.

When the reconciliatons and congratulations were over, and Mrs. Malone had gone to spread the news among the neighbors, and Mr. Flynn, all unwittingly, to be rebuked by his captain for an unaccountable unsteadiness of gait, Bill and Mamie sat side by side on the bench under the window and beamed across at the signboard.

"I guess that's the biggest proposal in the country, Bill," said Mamie happily. "I'm glad I'm going to marry such a clever fellow. How did you ever think of proposing with a lot of posters, kiddo?"

"Oh, that wasn't clever," answered Bill. "If a man likes his job he can make it say anything."

THE HOUSE OF DOOM

By RUTH LOOMIS SKEEN

ESTERDAY news came of the death of my old friend and college mate, Tristan Fauvel, a man I knew intimately and admired profoundly when I was studying in Paris.

Once we were like brothers, but we gradually drifted apart. For ten years I did not hear from him, and have not seen him in twenty years.

Tristan leaves a widow and two children. I remember his second wife was a French girl from New Orleans, Tiphaine Le Fleur. I never saw her, but heard that she was beautiful. She was, though, a second wife. Is it true, I wonder, that a second wife sometimes dines on a banquet of crumbs?

I knew Tristan's first wife. I was witness to the romance of his first marriage, which was a very unusual one.

Tristan had an American mother, a Southern girl, and though he was born in Paris, and spent his youth there, he was sometimes taken back to his mother's old home for a visit.

When I first knew him, his parents were dead. He had inherited the estate, and was going back to America at the close of his studies to live upon it with his two maiden aunts.

He had spoken to me many times of the old Southern town, steeped in tradition, quaint, provincial, occupied with the past; of the rambling colonial house, with its pillared galleries, long French windows, and unused ballroom; a house full of old mahogany, old silver, old letters, old rusty sorrows, old tattered joys, and the two old gentlewomen guarding it for him.

"The town," Tristan declared, "was full of maiden ladies of vague age, old-fashioned, pious and demure. Everyone was related, and all seemed to be wrapped in a veil of gentle melancholy."

"It is pathetic and absurd," wrote Tristan to me, after a year in Carrolton, "that a whole village should be so sentimental. I have attended twenty tea-parties, and heard at everyone of them the story of my mother's coming-out party. All their memories are bound in a sheaf, smelling of lavender, and yellow as old lace. As for my aunts, they are like roses that have been pressed in a book. You should see their cameos, their fans, their lace shawls. All this is delightful to a Frenchman. How gallantly I salute them! With what tenderness do I kiss their withered cheeks! They are as dainty, as exquisite, as the vignettes one sees in old-fashioned books of sentimental verse."

After finishing my work at Berlin, I decided to spend a few weeks with Tristan before taking up my professorship in a Western college. Tristan had pressed me to do this, and it was with great pleasure that I accepted his invitation for a month.

Carrolton was one of those picturesque towns hidden away among green hills, almost isolated in a little bowl of a valley, and obscured by trees. The houses were all much alike, set back in their own grounds among stately trees, with tangled, neglected gardens at their back. The spacious porches were covered with a dense growth of white honeysuckle,

almost overpowering in its sweetness, in which the humming birds darted perpetually.

It was June when I arrived. The gardens were a riot of color, with all the old-fashioned flowers in bloom, snowballs, peonies, syringas, roses, and many I could not name. The air was heavy with their mingled odor. The grass grew in wild luxuriance everywhere; it made a soft, deep carpet under the trees, unkept, but gorgeous as some discarded velvet robe.

After Tristan had shown me over the town, talking leisurely about its ragged, somnolent streets—for a car seemed an anomaly here—I remarked to him that the place made me think of death.

He had noticed it, too, he said, and attributed it to the constant decay of flowers and almost tropical vegetation.

On one side of the town, where the negroes lived, a dark and sluggish river flowed. A sort of deathly miasma seemed to hover above it, and strange, brilliantly colored insects darted over it in the heavy air.

Freelands, Tristan's home, stood on a hill a mile from the town and looking down upon it. It was a lovely spot; the air was fresher here, and the garden less neglected.

The aunts welcomed me with effusion. The "potpurri," as Tristan called them, were as quaint and old-worldly as he had pictured them. The cooking was a dream; the place like a lotus land. Day after day might pass here with a book, a good cigar, a charming woman for a companion, and the world forgotten.

I said this much to Tristan the evening of my first day, as we stood on the gallery facing the town.

He shrugged.

"Everything beautiful has something sinister about it. Come with me."

He led me down the terrace steps towards the back of the grounds. He pointed to a house directly beneath our eyes, a house set at the foot of the hill in a dreary hollow, and almost hidden by trees. It was an old house of red brick, and was once pretentious, but decay had claimed it for many years. It seemed to be slowly crumbling, moulding away. It had two stories, with many windows, heavily shuttered, tall, narrow doors, and a long, rotten and apparently tottering, porch in front. The bricks were weather-stained, and oozed a green slime. On the side of the house facing us a tenacious ivy plant, like some hideous excrescence, covered the whole wall, climbing even to the chimney.

Something about the appearance of the house, its dilapidated condition, its air of mystery and silence, aroused my curiosity.

"Is it abandoned, or haunted, or was someone murdered there?" I asked Tristan.

"Oh, not at all," he answered. "I am going there now, and you with me. In that lower room this way, where the ivy has been torn loose, lies a woman dying of cancer. That, my dear Barnhart, is a cancer-house. You have read of them. If you have never quite believed in one, I assure you, there is one."

I looked at it again with a shudder. Here also was the wild, luxurious growth of grass and trees, too many trees, trying to peer in through the shuttered windows of this damp house of death, most of them mournful cedars, through which the faint wind wandered, moaning.

"In an excellent brochure by Halley, he proves by indisputable evidence the existence in New England of several cancer houses in one village. His theory of transmission, however, does not suit me. It seems incredible that normal human beings should wish to live in that old house. Tell me more about it."

Tristan threw away his cigar, and leaned his arms heavily against the wall near which we were standing, his eyes moody and fixed upon the house.

"The Slade family has lived there for several generations. The place is an an

cestral house like this, full of memories. They are all dead now, save old Martha Travers and her granddaughter, Stella. Two out of every third generation of this family die of cancer; most of them have died in that house. Martha lies on her deathbed now. Six months ago I operated on her. I knew it was hopeless, but doctors must do something. In May, I operated again. The wound has never healed. The disease is spreading, and she is partially paralyzed. It is only a question of a day or two at most. I am convinced that cancer is part of the walls of that decaying house, but I cannot convince her. I have implored her to move for the girl's sake, but she could only tear it down, and this she won't do."

"You think, then, that the infection is in the house?"

"I do. This theory has been proven, as you said. A peculiarity I found in the history of the case leans strongly to heredity, however. All the Slades who have succumbed to cancer are of the same type; the family has always been quite distinctly blonde or brunette. The brunettes are the cancer victims; they are somewhat sallow, with heavy black hair and eyebrows, sullen, morose, and stockily built. Every dark Slade has a tendency to moles. Martha Travers has a huge mole in her left eyebrow. No blonde Slade has ever been cancerous."

"And the granddaughter?" I asked.

"Her hair is very dark; her eyes a deep blue; her skin has a peculiar pallor, yet healthy. Her face is beautiful, yet unutterably sad. She is very quiet; goes nowhere. They are devout Catholics. Martha Travers's sister was a nun in the Order of the Divine Childhood. Poor Mother Saint Peter, she also died of cancer."

"That would seem—"

Tristan cut me short.

"Ah, but she spent her youth here. It is said that she entered the order to expiate some unconfessed sin of her father."

"Does the girl realize, does she expect to become a victim; one the fatal third generation, as you say?"

Tristan sighed.

"I have tried to get her mind off the idea, but what can I do in that house, that atmosphere of brooding and perpetual horror? Her whole life has been full of horror. Her parents were both killed in a frightful railway disaster. After she finished school, she came here; there was no other place to go. She has spent twelve years in that lazar house. She came here from the convent at New Orleans, when she was seventeen, and she is now twenty-eight."

Tristan spread his arms out in a gesture of despair.

"What a life for a girl! Do you think there is hope for her?" I asked.

"I can't say. If she were to go away, perhaps she could forget, and be happy. But she says it's in her blood. She finds all the signs of it; she is morbid about it. One night I was dining there. We were walking in that little conservatory you see there. She wore a low-cut gown. A brambler rose scratched her shoulder. It bled a trifle. She gave a cry, and moved away, but not before I had seen against the polished whiteness of her shoulder a golden mole. Her skin was exquisite."

Tristan was trembling from head to foot. He could no longer speak.

"Tristan," I cried, astonished, "you love her."

"Yes," he cried, trying to regain his composure, and smiling wanly at me. "I'm mad about her, but she will not listen to me. She is obsessed with the idea of doom. At first she talked to me as one talks to one's physician. When I told her I loved her, she became silent. She is like granite. You can imagine how I suffer seeing her in this situation."

"She does not love you," I ventured.

"If she did, she would not consent to marry me. She is determined that the family shall die with her. But come, I must see Martha before night."

As we entered the grounds of the Slade place, I noticed that a thunder storm was rapidly rising in the west. The ominous stillness oppressed us. Birds twittered in the lifeless air, and every leaf was still.

"It rains almost every afternoon," said Tristan, as we mounted the steps.

An uncanny dampness seemed to exude from the worn flags of the walk, and a deathly chill lay upon the old house in spite of the heat.

An aged negress, who had seen us coming, opened the door before we knocked, and without speaking led us through the dim, wainscoted hall.

Tristan stepped into a spacious bedchamber, so indistinctly lighted that I could hardly discern the objects in it. Part of the ivy obscured the window, but a great deal of it had been ripped away to admit light and air.

The whole room seemed to be taken up by a large bed of carved walnut, with its immaculate linen and the mysteriously shrouded form of Martha Travers.

By the bed sat a nurse, the only person I had seen in Carrolton who was at all a part of the world I had left. She rose and moved aside as we advanced.

The patient lay upon her back in the heavy sleep of those drugged creatures who have forgotten for a while their particular hell. The damp of a clammy sweat was on her brow. Her arms lay stiff at her sides, and her body, bound in bandages, emitted the sickening odor of disinfectants. Her face wore the livid, greenish hue of cancer patients before death, and the heavy, dark hair fell away from it limply, startlingly black against the white pillow.

Tristan looked at the chart, felt the pulse, and shook his head.

"A matter of a few hours now," he whispered.

The woman opened her eyes and looked directly at him, but she saw nothing. The eyes were quite lifeless, like dead coals.

At this moment a frightful crash of thunder burst above our heads, followed by a blue glare of lightning which played upon the patient's face and threw into relief every object in that dismal room.

Through the window, the earth, the trees, the grass, indeed, the whole aspect of nature assumed the same greenish pallor of the woman's face.

"Come, let us go out," whispered Tristan.

The nurse resumed her vigil. We now heard the grateful sound of the rain. A delicious odor of wet earth came through the window and a cool breeze stirred the sheet on the bed.

I followed Tristan through the dark hall into the small conservatory. A girl was sitting there in a low, shabby chair, reading out of a prayer book, her lips moving as she prayed. I saw the pearly profile of her face, and decided it was beautiful. Her face was oval; her eyes almost purple, heavy-lidded with faint violet shadows under them. They were very sad. Her lips were remarkably red, like blood against the pale face. Her body was slight and delicate, and she wore a little frock of white organdie, with here and there a blue flower printed upon it. Her heavy hair was fastened simply in a loose knot and unadorned. Her hands were wonderfully sensitive and well shaped. I have some theories, perhaps foolish, about hands. Hers were tense, emotional. I watched them and decided she loved Tristan.

The room was filled with blooming plants. At one end was a small grotto containing a statue of the Virgin with pensive, downcast eyes, and the hands in an attitude of prayer.

As we approached, the girl rose and came forward with a smile.

Tristan's love showed in his eyes, and a slow, painful blush dyed his face.

"How is grandmother?" she asked. Her voice was rich and throaty. She was very calm with the calmness of a condemned person.

Tristan led her a short distance away, and I heard him speak of death, but she made no outcry. They came back in a moment, and she gave me her hand, smiling at me without seeing me.

"Doctor Fauvel has consented to stay until it is over. Let us go into the dining room. I will have Rhoda set you something to eat."

We sat down in the gloomy, cheerless dining room, while she went in search of the servant. Tristan moved his chair to the table, put his elbows upon it, and his face in his hands.

"Isn't it damnable," he groaned, "that we can spare her none of this? Do you know what she wants to do when it is over? Be a nurse in a cancer hospital. She has even pried out the place, but I'll have it stopped. I'll appeal to Father Matthews. She is sending for him now."

"Is the girl mad?" I exclaimed.

"Mad? She's exaltée. She reads her prayers and the lives of the saints, and spends her days in this dark, pestilential house."

A door opened. We heard the frightful wailing of the patient, who had come out from under the influence of the drugs.

Tristan hastened to the door.

"She must have more. Her suffering will be intolerable. Stella must not stay in there.

The girl came to me in a moment, looking frightened. She had forgotten to order the refreshment. We could hear the moans of her grandmother across the hall, and they sounded horrible in the semi-obscurity of the silent room.

"Let us go into the garden," I suggested; "or is it too damp?"

"The paths are sandy," she answered, rising obediently.

She led the way to the summerhouse with a rustic seat. The grass was still heavy with raindrops, and she held her skirts daintily. I could see her pretty ankles in their coarse, white stockings.

After a casual remark about my visit, which met with little response, I ventured: "My friend, Tristan—is he not charming?"

"Charming?"

She turned a serious face to me. It was now twilight, and her face was curiously vivid in the dusk.

"Charming? Yes, he is very good."

"Ah, yes," I answered, "good; to be sure, he is good, but it is not given to many to have the charm of Tristan."

"He has been very kind," she said. "I can never repay him."

"Indeed, you can," I cried, forgetting discretion. "You can love him. He loves you; he wishes to make you happy. Tristan has the heart of a god."

Her hands which had been caressing the vine leaves became suddenly still.

"There can be no happiness for me," she said simply, after a moment. "You have heard my story."

"That signifies nothing." I spoke vehemently, as Tristan would have done. "Surely you are not a fatalist?"

"How can I be otherwise?" she answered. "No!" She spoke for the first time passionately, moving nearer until the rhythm of her breathing stirred me.

"As you say, your friend is charming. He is good; he is of my religion. I cannot cast a shadow on his life. As you must know, he belongs to light, to laughter, to all things gay and bright. I could not emerge from this house of gloom in which I have lived so long and bring happiness to him. The darkness is part of my being. I feel at home in the shadows. I have read and thought a great deal. In my lonely heart, many flowers have bloomed; some of them are poison flowers. I know Tristan. I have watched him. He is chivalrous. He sees in me a sad situation. He thinks himself in love with me. There is no one else here. It is not right that I should take advantage of his youth. I am going away. Very soon it will all be but a memory."

"And you," I stammered, "what will you do?"

"I am going to be a nurse. There seems nothing left. When I was a child, I thought I could never be a nun. Now I am merely waiting."

"But, surely," I said, "life is all before you. We soon overcome sorrow that is past."

"Not when it is a part of us; then it is ineffaceable."

At this moment, we discerned Tristan hurrying toward us. We went to meet him.

He spoke brokenly, oblivious of me.

"Stella, darling, she is dead. She died quite suddenly. You will forgive me. I tried. Father Matthews has just come."

Stella sat down again, her face hidden. Tristan hovered near, longing for the right to comfort her. I made my escape, and found the priest seated over a glass of wine and a cigar in the dining room.

When he saw me, his face assumed a cheerful solemnity, and he greeted me in a professional manner. We spoke of the weather, of the village, all those indifferent topics brought forth when we do not really care to know each other.

Suddenly we heard the clamor of the doorbell through the silent house. I rose quickly and answered it. The meek and smirking undertaker stood there with his ghastly paraphernalia. Tristan and Stella appeared at the same time. Stella was quite calm.

"She is going to rest now," he explained to me. "Rhoda will stay with her."

He laid his hand on her shoulder for a moment with a gesture of supreme devotion.

"You have given me your promise that you will try to sleep," he said tenderly.

Stella and the priest went out together, speaking softly of the dead woman.

Tristan flung himself wearily into a chair.

"She finally promised she would go home with us for a time, until everything is arranged. I spoke to her again out there. It was bad taste, I know, but I forgot myself. I wanted the right to comfort her. She is determined to leave. I can't blame her for that. But a convent! My God, we must stop it, Geoff."

I told him a little of our conversation.

"She knows her own mind, Tristan. She is not a child. In solitude one matures quickly. Perhaps it is best for you to give her up."

"I do not want what is best; I want her."

"But the future, Tristan. You, a medical man, surely realize there could be no children. By and by, as you grew older, you might regret. She would divine it; that would be tragic. Or she—"

Tristan rose in disgust and walked away from me.

After the funeral, Stella returned with us to Freelands. The two kindly aunts sat on each side of her in the carriage, each patting a hand, delighted to be of service.

When Tristan saw her sitting at his table, his brown eyes, usually gay, went misty for a moment, and he sighed: "If we can only contrive to keep her here."

She was, however, strangely restless and ill at ease, wandering from room to room and saying little.

Tristan was troubled.

"She does not seem quite herself. Do you think, Geoff, it's the funeral and the reaction? I suppose it is. Martha Travers was a very exacting woman, used to make her sit for hours reading in that stuffy room. Good Lord, she even nursed her after the first operation! Plenty of money, but too stingy to hire a nurse. What that poor child endured—"

He broke off abruptly.

One morning Stella announced to us that she was going to the city on business connected with her grandmother's estate and would be absent for a night or two.

"Do you think you are equal to it? Shall not someone go with you?" asked Tristan, who could not bear the thought of her out of his sight.

Her answer was almost petulant.

"You know, Doctor Fauvel, that I have frequently gone on business for grandmother for years."

Tristan said no more. He was pained by her answer.

On the next night but one, before our dinner, Stella returned with a cab full of luggage. She was quite light-hearted, and her eyes were like blue fire; a fire burned, too, in her pale face. She sat down with us and ate heartily, abandoned to some mood almost childlike and quite new to us.

Tristan watched her narrowly.

"Are you feverish, Stella?" he inquired.

She leaned over for a moment and placed her hand lightly upon his wrist.

"Always the doctor," she said. "I assure you I am quite well, and have been spending money of my own buying things I have always wanted. Isn't that enough to make me gay?"

The aunts looked a trifle shocked, and Stella discreetly changed the subject.

After dinner, we crowded around and watched her open her parcels. She had bought something for each of us; for the aunts, some china she had heard them covet; for me, a new book I had wished to read; for Tristan, a small, but exquisite, copy of Watt's "Hope."

"I love it," she whispered, "and I want you to love it for my sake."

Her parted lips were enticingly red, her eyes sparkling with happiness. She appeared an enchanting Stella. For herself, she had bought some new music and an odd silver chain for her throat, set with amethysts.

"I love them," she confessed naively. "They match my eyes. You know Lafcadeo Hearn says that all jewel colors exist in eyes. I've never had any jewels."

The next morning she came down late. Tristan had gone on his round of calls. I was reading a play by Remy de Gourmonts on the south terrace, when she appeared.

She came forward hurriedly, nervously, for her, the gay mood of last night gone. She wore a wonderful new frock, dainty white shoes and embroidered silk stockings. The costume transformed her. I bowed with the air of having just been introduced, but she paid no heed to my foolishness.

"Listen," she ordered. "Get the little car quickly before Tristan returns. I want you to take me over to the house."

I demurred.

"Not there, Stella. Is it imperative?"

"Yes," she entreated. "I won't keep you a moment. It is something I must do. Please, please, do it. If Tristan comes, he will think you have just taken me for a ride."

When I returned with the car, she was waiting, and on her head she wore a sophisticated and stunning hat.

As we entered the unkept driveway, I heard her sigh, and saw a shadow cross her face. I sat on one of the rickety garden chairs and waited until she went into the house. She was back in a moment. I started to rise, but she sat in the chair opposite to me.

"I wanted to talk to you," she said. "I think we can talk better here at the old house. But first I want to ask you a question. You will answer truly, will you not?"

"As best I can, Stella," I answered gravely.

"You do not believe in meddling with the lives of others?"

"Emphatically no."

"If you saw someone doing something that he—that she—thought wisest and best and happiest for the most people concerned, you would not spoil it by interfering?"

"I hope not, if I could be made to see that it was for the best; if I knew it would turn out right."

"But what can we know, what do we know of life? What impresses you most about it?"

I thought a few seconds.

"Its absolute futility, I think," I answered presently.

"Just so. We are on a journey. We don't know whence we came, nor where we go. We may put into no port, is that true? Well, do you think highly of Tristan?"

"Need you have asked that?"

"Then I hope you love me a little for his sake."

I smiled this time.

"Somewhat for Tristan, but a great deal more for yourself."

"Thank you. You would like, then, to see us happy?"

"Indeed, yes."

"How soon must you go back to your stupid college?"

"Not before the last of August."

"Oh, that is so good. Now promise that you will keep a secret for me. Our happiness depends upon it, mine, yours, Tristan's."

"I promise."

"When I went to the city," she spoke quietly in a level voice, "I consulted a specialist. For two months I have been in dreadful suspense. He confirmed all my fears. He merely said it was unusual in one so young. He—he advised an operation."

She looked at me without flniching. I felt like weeping.

"All my life," she went on rapidly, as though speaking of something long hidden, "I have prayed to be spared. I offered to be a nun if my prayer was answered. Always that fear made my life horrible. I prayed to our Lord, to His Holy Mother, to the saints. Up to last Tuesday, I prayed incessantly, in the face of everything. What did it avail?"

She spread out her hands with a gesture of supreme dismissal.

"Well, I am through with prayer now. Saints are nothing to me. I have cast everything overboard. My heart is quite empty of everything but Tristan. Do you know what I did when the doctor told me? I laughed. I was so glad it was settled forever, but I was not afraid. I went to the most expensive place I knew and ordered a luncheon. I had wine and flowers, quantities of flowers, and there was a fountain of blue, blue water with artificial swans. A girl came out and danced. I loved her dancing. I wanted to get up by her side and dance, too. I was strangely happy. I no longer had anything to fear. Oh, I see by your face you understand. I felt sure you would. I feared nothing, and I no longer felt obliged to be good. Then it came to me quite suddenly, this plan. I think it is wonderful, if you do not spoil it. The doctor said there was so little time. Delay was dangerous, but that now there was no danger of infection for anyone. Was he right? I wish to be absolutely sure of that. I know you will tell me the truth; that's why I had to confide in you."

"I believe so," I stammered; "at least, the medical world has agreed—"

She continued hurriedly.

"I bought clothes, a load of pretty things I wanted, and I decided to marry Tristan. When I can no longer conceal it from him, I have this."

She took from her bosom a small bottle.

"Doctor Cowles gave it to me. He cautioned me many times never to take but one tablet. When the time comes, I'll take four, without pain, near Tristan; no agony, no ghastly knife, only a quiet falling to sleep."

"But think of Tristan's grief," I cried.

"I have. If I go away to a sanatorium, he will know and be wretched, and I cannot bear that he should know. If I leave and he does not know, he will grieve. You see, you must see, that this is the best way. We shall have belonged to each other. He will have only happy memories. It will be natural, something that might happen to anyone. Surely, you can see—"

"Are you sure the diagnosis is correct?"

She began to describe symptoms that were unmistakable. I groaned. I could not lie to her. Neither could I pity her, a misery so splendid, so superbly born. I silently wrung her hand.

"Listen," she said bravely, rising. "One thing I want you to do. It will be hard, but for Tristan, stay until afterward and comfort him, will you?"

I promised. We entered the car, and turned our back on the old house with a shudder.

"Let us not mention this again," she said. "If death must come to me, I am resigned, but I am determined it must come sweetly. I have that, at least, in my power. If Tristan knew, afterward, he would be glad."

"Yes," I answered, "anyone would be glad—afterward."

I was quite sure of this.

I shut myself up in Tristan's study, and brooded over the thing all day. My heart was sick. By keeping silence, I was a moral accomplice to her act. If I refused to meddle, and if Tristan ever suspected, he might hate me. But if I spoke, I resigned her to a slow and loathsome death from an incurablle disease, the horror of useless surgery, estrangement from the man she loved, and the loss of a few hours of happiness; she who had known nothing but sorrow. I knew why she dared confide in me. She knew me to be intellectually honest, and she wanted my moral support in an act that looked to her extremely right and sensible.

That night, as I smoked my last cigar on the terrace, sighing moodily among the honeysuckle, the lovers came up to me across the flower beds, moving ecstatically under the great old trees, and told me they were to be married the next day. For a moment I forget the hideous secret I shared with Stella, and my joy in their happiness was genuine enough.

Stella was married like an obedient daughter of the church by Father Matthews. She carried a white satin prayer book and a rosary in her hand that had been her mother's. The two little aunts and I were the only witnesses.

I made a feint of leaving next day, but the protest from Tristan was so indignant, and Stella's glance so reproachful, that I was persuaded to remain.

Those were wonderful days for all of us. The sight of Tristan's happiness, of Stella's radiant courage, the delight of the two old ladies, incurably romantic, have remained with me always as one of the most exquisite and poignant experiences of my life. Tristan and Stella were quite shamelessly devoted to each other. The rest of us sat looking on as at some pretty pastoral of amour in a setting of flowers and sunlight.

We had our meals on the terrace among the honeysuckles and humming birds. The earth drowsed all day languidly beneath our eyes; the sky was cloudless, a truly bridal blue; the nights were sown with wonderful stars and caressing as the touch of a beloved hand.

In the long, mellow afternoons, Stella rested in a hammock, clad in some fragrant, billowy garment which floated about her like a white cloud, while Tristan read to her, and I sat at a distance watching them. For some curious reason, she never wanted me long out of her sight. She would often pat my hands and say:

"Good old Geoff."

Tristan would laugh and say:

"I'm jealous of Geoff. Why do you love him so much?"

"On the contrary," she would answer with adorable coquetry, "it is I who am jealous, and of you both. He knew you first, years and years ago."

I had bought her a toy dog, the first pet she had ever owned, and she kept it always about her, talking nonsense to it by the hour. The aunts adored her, and she acted towards them like a sweet daughter. When Tristan went out, they showed her the family treasures and old albums containing quaint pictures of

Tristan as a child. These she would kiss ardently.

"Tell me everything about him," she would cry greedily. "See his darling legs. How dear and naughty he looks."

In the evenings, she played and sang for us, or sat with Tristan's arms about her, lightly sharing his big willow chair, while we smoked and talked of Paris. She had studied a little French in the convent, and Tristan helped her revive it, while we laughed together over her funny accent. He made her learn a few words every day, and it came to be the rule that we spoke only French at breakfast.

"Next year, darling, we'll go to France."

As Tristan said this, I saw a spasm of pain cross her face.

"Let us not speak of next year, Tristan," she cried passionately. "Let us be happy now."

Those weeks were to all of us well-nigh perfect. Stella was more like a happy child than a woman. Her soul shone through her thin, little body like a light through alabaster. I do not think a shadow dimmed a moment of her shining. We rose early so as not to miss the bird-song and the dew. It was her wish. Once she said to me:

"These days, so precious, this warm, kind earth—we must not miss a moment of it, must we?"

She stretched her arms out with a little piteous half-laugh, half-sob.

"I love my mother, the earth. I'll not be afraid to lie against her bosom in the dark."

I turned away abruptly to hide my tears; then back to her. She smiled tenderly at me as if from some great distance.

"Forgive me," she said softly. "I did not mean to hurt you."

"Stella is a trifle ill this morning," he explained. "Nothing serious. She didn't sleep much. I think the heat is getting her."

I felt my heart contract as I watched the aunts carrying iced drinks to that darkened chamber. I smelled the odor of cologne, and heard Stella's sweet voice thanking them. I went in search of her little dog, wrote a silly little note, tied it about the dog's neck, and sent it up to her room. Her laugh floated down the hall to me, and her "Quaint old Geoff" reassured my aching heart.

That night, Tristan and I smoked alone and said little. He sent up to her every little while, worried and restless.

"She sends her love to you," he said when he came down. "She thinks she can sleep now that dusk has come."

Finally he returned and reported her sleeping.

On the next day she did not appear, but on the evening of the third day she joined us on the terrace at twilight, supported by Tristan's arm, and lay in the hammock, listening to our talk. At nine o'clock she made us good night gaily.

"I'll see you at breakfast," she said. "Tristan, dear, run up stairs and see if the gas is on in my room. You might stumble with me."

He went quickly to do her bidding. The aunts had gone into the dining room to prepare a soothing drink for her. She turned to me swiftly.

"It has to be to-night," she said softly. "The pain is growing beyond endurance. I can no longer conceal it."

I took her hand in both of mine. I was wrung with sorrow.

"You are not afraid?" I asked huskily.

She smiled.

"After so much happiness, no. Kiss me, Geoff, kind old Geoff, and love Tristan. I hope, when I wake up, if I ever do, it will be in a garden like this, with the memory of Tristan's brown, blessed eyes—"

Tristan appeared on the stairs, and she turned towards him with a smile.

He carried her up the stairs, and I stood beneath cheering them on. At the landing, they were overcome with laugh-

ter at some silly joke of mine, and Tristan was obliged to sit down with her from weakness.

"I'm as bad as that Fanny person in 'Sappho,'" she laughed down to me. "You remember, Geoff, never marry; a wife is a horrible burden."

I lay awake all night listening for I knew not what. A little slim and wry-faced moon peered at me through the pear trees. I heard the moan of the wood doves and the many insect voices of the night. At dawn, I fell asleep.

Towards day, Tristan discovered her with her cheek upon her head, as she always slept, her long braid of hair lying across the pillow. She looked so like a child in her lace nightgown, adorned with pink rosebuds, and her little lace cap, with its rosy lining, that it was hard to think of her as having suffered.

Something inevitable and significant about her death must have spoken to Tristan's heart. He asked no questions. Once he said to me:

"What poet said that there is something poetic about the death of a young girl? Stella's death was poetic, was it not?"

We buried her at Freelands among the flowers, under a graceful willow. I have always been very glad that all happened as she had planned. And now Tristan is also dead, and I—I am an old man.

AN AERIAL SWITCH-BACK

By HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY

"HAVEN'T the proverbial one chance in a million," mused Harry Hill, as he stood alone on the south brink of the arroyo that divided the camp of Aranzazu Copper Company.

A man was descending the opposite declivity, making his way laboriously over the rocky trail, the stones of which were worn smooth by a century of wear by sandalled feet of Mexican peons.

It was barely two hundred yards across the arroyo on the level, but by the time one had scrambled down to the bottom of the cleft and up the opposite wall, he had consumed a good half hour of time, and he would be puffing like a wind-broken horse. The town of Aranzazu is situated high in the mountains, nine thousand feet above the sea level, and the air is very rarefied.

Harry had recognized the man as his friend, Mike Kelly, the boss of the diamond drill gang, and was waiting for him, knowing that he would ascend the southern declivity at that point.

The mining camp, usually humming with activity at this hour of the day, seemed almost deserted. The machinery was silent and the thousand or more workmen, who should have been in evidence everywhere, were conspicuous by their absence. The few men in sight were, for the most part, Mexicans, who loitered in the shade or chatted together in small groups. It was significant that each of them was armed with a rifle and heavy cartridge belt.

Mike Kelly arrived at the top of the arroyo, puffing stentoriously from his exertions. He greeted Harry with astonishment.

"I thought they had you in the cooler!" he exclaimed.

"They let me out half an hour ago," answered Harry quietly. "I guess I am one of the elect," he added with a nervous laugh.

"What! You don't mean—" Mike did not finish the sentence, but stared blankly at his friend, who nodded gloomily.

"The fugitive prisoner law," he said in a low tone. "I have until sundown."

"Till sundown! What are you loafing around here for then? Why don't you make a break?"

Harry laughed bitterly. "I'm caught like a rat in a trap, can't you see? Both the Concepcion trails are guarded by the rebels. It is useless to go toward Mazapil, for that way is blocked, too, and it I did succeed in getting over the mountains, they could easily catch me on the plain, for it is as bare as a billiard table. Look!"

Harry turned slowly, and following his line of vision, Mike saw a Mexican sitting on the steps of the old store building, fifty yards away. The man had a rifle across his knees, and seemed to be peering warily at them from under a battered old sombrero.

"That is José Martinez," said Harry quietly. "He has been working under me in the San Antonio mine for two years, and always professed to be my friend. I helped him along to a better job. He went out with me when I led the men against the rebels, Monday. After they had licked us, he was glad

enough to go over and enlist with the enemy, like the rest of his cowardly brothers, and now he stands ready to shoot me down like a dog the minute I try to get away. There's Felipe, over by the donkey engine. He's another."

Mike looked down at his feet gloomily. He kicked a stone over the edge of the arroyo and watched it rattle to the bottom before speaking.

"It looks dubious," he said, shaking his head. "What made you mix up in this fool affair, anyhow? Why didn't you stick with the rest of us? We're not being molested."

"I was trying to save the mine," answered Harry. "I supposed that of course the company would stand with the Federals, seeing that this property is a government grant."

"You didn't have to do it," grumbled Mike. "It ain't your diggings."

"I suppose I was too impetuous," admitted Harry. "I was down in the mine when José came running in with the information that the rebels were coming. I got my men together and hurried them outside, armed with pickaxes and shovels and any old thing they could find. The first thing we saw was a bunch of rebels coming at the head of the old Spanish trail, and I tried to rout them, knowing they must be winded by the climb, but at the first shot my men broke and ran, not having any firearms to speak of, and the next I knew, they had me roped down and in jail. It seems now, that they didn't meet with any other resistance in taking the town."

"No," said Mike. "The drill gang were all on the surface and saw the mix-up. You were on the other side of the arroyo and, of course, we couldn't get to you in time to offer any assistance. We decided right there and then to remain neutral and let the company take care of its own mines. There are too many jobs in my trade waiting for men, for me to go fooling around with a greaser insurrection. Grant, the general superintendent, sided right in with the rebels as soon as he saw how things were going. He has turned the whole town over to the Insurrectionists and is entertaining the rebel general at his house. They say he has a grand 'stand-in' with the old cuss, but of course, you know, he is doing this to save the mines. The rebels would break everything if they once got started."

"I wish I had kept out of it," said Harry bitterly.

"What on earth are you going to do?" asked Mike.

"Do! What can I do except stand around here until I am shot down like a dog?"

Mike Kelly clenched his hairy fists angrily.

"The dirty dogs! Blame it all, Harry, we can't let you go out like this! We gringos have got to stick together! We've got to figure out some way to save you! I'll see Grant."

"Grant!" laughed Harry. "He can't do anything! He's trying to save the mines, and you know as well as I, that he'll stand by his employers at any cost!"

"I'll see him, anyhow," reiterated Mike. "He isn't going to let a fellow countryman be shot up by a lot of greasers just for the sake of a soulless corporation, if I know it! You stick around where I can get you quick, and I'll see the boys."

Mike left his friend and climbed up the bluff to the drill shop, while Harry turned despondently away and walked slowly up the narrow-gauge tram tracks to the San Antonio mine, which was one of the group owned by the Aranzazu Copper Company, and where he had held the position of mine boss for three years.

He gazed gloomily into the deserted tunnel, but dared not enter, for this move might be interpreted as an attempt to escape, by the dozen or more pairs of eyes he knew were watching for just such a move on his part, in order that

they might consummate the murder for which they had been detailed.

The fugitive law had him in its toils. This law, which was enacted by the old government, some time before the present insurrection, applied principally to political prisoners, and consisted of leading the unhappy victim to the jail door and liberating him, with the stipulation that unless he made good his escape within a certain number of hours he would be shot down. The prisoner was allowed to go, but from the moment he left the jail door until he fell with from one to a dozen bullets in his back, he was under the surveillance of armed representatives of the law, who saw to it that he never escaped alive.

Harry Hill slowly retraced his steps along the tram track. He knew that his hour was near. They had given him until sundown and now the sun hung just above the ridge of Mount Alto. In less than ten minutes it would sink from sight, and then his Mexican executioners would vie with each other for the first shot at his defenseless back.

As he neared the drill shop he glanced inquiringly in that direction, and wondered if Mike had succeeded in formulating some scheme to save him from his impending doom. The shop seemed deserted and Harry was about to pass by when a low whistle attracted his attention.

He paused and looked about wonderingly. The whistle was not repeated. but instinctively he felt that it had been meant for him and continued looking about. Finally, happening to turn in the direction of the cable house, he saw the face of his friend, Mike Kelly, peering out through the half open door and beckoning frantically.

Harry realized instantly that something was in the wind and looked about cautiously to see if the coast were clear. Some fifty yards behind him walked José Martinez, his rifle slung carelessly under his arm and his eyes peering alertly out from under the rim of his sombrero.

Harry measured the distance with his eye. In order to reach the cable house it would be necessary for him to drop over the ledge on which he stood, to some tracks ten feet below, in the cable yard. From there, it was about fifty feet to the door where Mike awaited him.

He sat down on the ledge and looked about carelessly, as if he were merely resting. Immediately his guard stopped, and after watching Harry suspiciously for a minute he also sat down on a small pile of ore on the opposite side of the tracks.

But one half of the sun was now visible above Mount Alto. Harry realized that he must act quickly. Without a glance in the direction of the Mexican, he dropped to the tracks below and sprang across the space that separated him from the cable house.

A shout told him he had aroused the suspicions of the watchful José, and just as he reached the door, a rifle cracked and a bullet buzzed angrily by his head. An instant later, Mike had jerked him inside and was slinging a heavy iron bar across the solidly built door.

"Quick!" he shouted, as he sprang to the lever that released the drum on which the cable traveled. "Jump into that bucket!"

"What are you trying to do, man?" gasped Harry. "You'll be—"

"Never mind me!" interrupted Mike angrily. "I'm in this as much as you are now! Get into that bucket quick, before they head us off."

The report of the rifle had attracted the other rebels, as the fugitives could tell by the shouts from the outside. After a second's hesitation, Harry turned resolutely to the door and laid his hand on the bar.

"I am not going to get you into any such fix as this, Mike," he declared stoutly. "I'll go out and be shot if

necessary, but they shan't kill you." The cable drum was beginning to revolve rapidly, and with an angry exclamation, Mike sprang across the room, and seizing his smaller companion about the waist, he carried him to the bucket and threw him in. Quickly he ran the bucket off the side track on to the cable, and then scrambled in, crushing Harry to the bottom and holding him there.

The rebels were battering against the door, and Mike smiled grimly as he thought of how he had carefully removed all timbers and other implements that might be user as rams, to the inside of the cable house not ten minutes before. He felt confident that the Mexicans would not be able to get through the heavy door until after he and Harry were well on their way.

The steel bucket occupied by the fugitives was one of the several hundred used by the Aranzazu Copper Company to convey ore from the mines to the smelter at Concepcion del Oro, at the foot of the mountains, five miles away.

The bucket was suspended by a curved hanger to the cable, which ran by gravity. The incline was such that one loaded bucket, going down, would pull up two empty buckets. These buckets were placed at intervals of fifty feet along the cable and the hangers were so arranged as to automatically switch the buckets off on stationary tracks at the two terminals.

The operation of the line was simple, the cable merely revolving around huge wooden drums at each station, which could be instantly stopped or started by merely applying or releasing the brakes attached to the drums. Gravity did the rest. Therefore, once started, it was impossible for the rebels to bring the bucket back to the starting point until after it had passed the lower station.

The cable had been in operation up to the time the Insurrectos had invaded Aranzazu and, therefore, there were a number of loaded buckets on the cable ahead of the men, which would keep the line running until after it had passed the lower station.

For perhaps a hundred yards the bucket traveled under a closed shed, and where it emerged it would be some twenty feet above the ground. Mike knew, however, that any soldiers standing on the abutments at the exit could easily shoot down into the bucket, and he cautioned Harry to crouch as low as possible and remain quiet.

As they shot out into the twilight, Mike looked up apprehensively. The abutments were deserted. The rebels were probably concentrated at the door of the cable house endeavoring to break it down, if, indeed, they had not already succeeded.

He straightened up with a sigh of relief and made room for his companion to rise up beside him. Their positions were cramped, as the bucket was only three feet in diameter and a little over four feet deep.

"Now you have done it!" exclaimed Harry, as he looked over the side of the swinging bucket. "You've killed us both!"

"We're a long ways from dead yet," grinned Mike. "We're on our way and they can't back us up or shoot us unless they can fly."

"We can only go to Concepcion!" stormed Harry. "That town is also in the hands of the Insurrectos, and all those greasers back there will have to do is to 'phone down and have us intercepted!"

"I know it," admitted Mike cheerfully. "But I had to do something, didn't I? The other boys refused to mix up in this affair; I 'phoned over to Grant and he said he could not interfere as he had already had trouble enough getting inside the confidence of the rebel general, and didn't propose taking any chances by making unreasonable requests at this time. That put it up

to me and I figured out this ruse and am doing my best to save you, and the only thanks I am getting is a cussing!" Mike put this last in an aggrieved tone.

"Oh, I appreciate your good intentions," said Harry. "What I am raving about is that you've gotten yourself into such a fix. My fate was already settled and I would have been dead by now if you hadn't interfered, but that didn't make it necessary for you to die, too—Hello! What's that?"

The cable jerked suddenly, and an instant later came to a dead stop.

"They've broken into the cable house and applied the brake," grinned Mike. "Now, if they have a slack wire walker in the bunch, he can run out here and shoot us. I don't know what else they can do."

"You seem mighty cool about this situation!" exclaimed Harry. "Have you any idea how we are going to get out of this fix?"

"Not the remotest," answered Mike, still grinning. "I've just started things and now we'll see where they end up."

Harry peered over the side of the bucket. They were swinging in space over a rocky cleft in the mountains, fully five hundred feet above ground. The bucket had covered a distance of over a mile since they had started and was now well on its way toward Concepcion del Oro.

There were three ways to reach Concepcion from Aranzazu. One was by the cable, another, by the old trail, built by the Spaniards several centuries ago and now but little used because of its dangerous condition, and the third, by the new trail, built by the mining company.

It was now impossible to approach the fugitives by the cable. The nearest point to which either trail approached them was over a mile distant, and the intervening space was impossible except by long and arduous climbing on foot. Even if their pursuers did succeed in reaching a point below them, the heavy steel bucket would be ample protection against their bullets.

Still, they could not remain suspended in mid-air forever. For nearly half an hour, they remained motionless, anxiously watching in every direction for evidence of pursuit. Harry was beginning to wonder what the outcome would be, when the cable started again.

"Here we go!" shouted Mike gleefully. "These greasers have finally figured it out, just as I expected they would! They've 'phoned down to Concepcion to have us intercepted, and now we're on our way!"

"But we'll be carried right into their arms!" expostulated Harry. "We are more at their mercy than ever!"

"They'll be looking for us all right," chuckled Mike, "but I've got one more trick up my sleeve that they haven't reckoned on."

"What's that?" asked Harry.

"We'll go back to Aranzazu," answered Mike.

"Go back! How? We can't fly man!"

"Just wait a minute and I'll show you," grinned Mike.

At irregular intervals along the cable line, were erected skeleton steel towers, varying in height from twenty to one hundred feet. These were placed as supports and guides for the cable, wherever the latter approached the uneven surface of the mountain close enough to connect with them.

Mike pointed ahead to one of these towers about fifty feet distant. "When we come under the arm of that tower, you grab it and swing loose and get into the skeleton work," he instructed Harry. "I'll try and make it with you, but if I don't I'll get off at the next tower and come back."

Harry grasped his intentions instantly and stood up in the bucket in readiness to seize hold of the arm that projected out from the tower as a support and guide for the cable.

The men were lucky, for both succeeded in grasping the arm as they swung by, and a second later they were swinging in mid-air, while the empty bucket shot on without them. Hand over hand, they made their way to the tower, and a minute later they were astride the arm which guided the returning cable on the opposite side.

In a few seconds, an empty bucket came along, and by seizing hold on the cable above it, the two men succeeded in swinging themselves into it. Not without considerable risk, however, for the bucket swayed and rocked and threatened to capsize until they had squatted down in the bottom.

"There!" said Mike, with a grunt of satisfaction. "We're playing tag with those greasers in a manner they least expect! Now, if they've done what a Mexican naturally will do, they are right now burning up the trail to Concepcion in an effort to get there in time for the killing. Keep your head down and don't let any one see us, and if the cable house is empty we'll be—"

"Right where we started!" interrupted Harry. "Only now you are in it as well as I. Why don't you keep out of it, you white Irishman?"

"Because I'm trying to save your hide you unappreciative Texas ranger!" retorted Mike genially. "Now shut up and lie low; we're getting near home."

The return trip was accomplished inside of ten minutes, and as the bucket entered the long shed that preceded the cable house, the fugitives rose apprehensively to their feet and peered anxiously ahead. The drum room was empty. As Mike had anticipated, Harry's death watch was probably hurrying down the trail to Concepcion in the hope of arriving there in time to participate in the pleasure of killing a gringo.

The two men sprang from the bucket as it rounded the curve to approach the drum, and looked about.

The battered door hung by one hinge. It was evident that the heavy iron bar had held well.

He peered cautiously out through the open door. It was now quite dark, and there was not an Insurrecto in sight.

"The've all gone down to our funeral," chuckled Harry in an undertone. "Now come on. We'll go up the tram track past your old mine, and from there we'll hit the Santa Rosa trail over the south range, switch on to the Mazapil down to the plain and intercept the railroad this side of Concepcion."

He slid out the door closely followed by Harry, crossed the cable yards, and a moment later they pulled themselves up on the upper tracks and were hurrying away in the darkness.

About midnight, a train consisting of an engine and one coach, formerly the private car of the general manager of the Aranzazu Copper Company, but now confiscated by the rebels and probably full of Insurrectos, stopped at one of the little stations along the route between Concepcion del Oro and Saltillo, to take water.

Just before it pulled out again, two bedraggled figures dodged out from behind a clump of mesquite bushes and crawled under the coach and on to the trucks, where they stretched out, clinging to the brakebeam.

Three hours later, when the train pulled into the yards at Saltillo, these same men crawled from under the car, very black, dusty and tired, and dodging through the yards to escape detection, hurried by a roundabout route to the Hotel Romo, where they were greeted with exclamations of amazement by several of their countrymen.

"We had a telephone that you were shot last night in Concepcion!" exclaimed one.

"Not us," grinned Mike Kelly. "Any old time a bunch of greasers can outwit an Irish-American diamond drill operator and a Texas ranger, they're going some!"

JILTING PARMELIA

By LEO NOBLE BURNETT

CASSIUS CODDINGTON was tired of love. He was also tired of shaving people and rubbing powder into their homely faces. He operated Chair No. 3 in a musty barber shop which had blue checkered linoleum on the floor and baths in the rear—either tub or needle. Cassius Coddington was bored by life in general as he stood to-night gazing into the bureau mirror.

"You're a bald little devil," said his reflection in the mirror in the candid way which mirrors have.

He took up a brush and exercised it with a barber's professional skill, thereby making his hair go much farther than anyone else could have made it go under the circumstances. He switched out the light and passed with a sigh down the squeezy stairway into the heavy hotness of the street. At the corner he boarded a car for the North End where love was waiting to be spurned.

Parmelia lived in a dusty little house under the wing of a furniture factory which cast out black smoke by day and long sombre shadows by night. She lived with her mother and brother, the latter earning enough in the factory for the upkeep of the dusty house and the meager livelihood of its occupants. Parmelia had never worked in the sense of working, and for a year had been preparing for her marriage to Cassius; and for the most part her preparations had consisted of probing on her none-too-hasty lover to the rapid consummation of the event.

He didn't know exactly why he had ceased to be fond of her. In common they had artlessness, unoriginality and physical commonness. They were two simple souls and should have made as congenial a couple as any who take their dinners to the park on a Sunday. But somehow he wearied of her. He no longer experienced the same impulsive joy at seeing her. Her kisses were too common. Once she was a luxury, something to be attained, but now she was a habit. As the car rattled him along he determined that he would tell her to-night and have it over with. The very thought electrified him for he was a man who was guided almost entirely by exterior forces and this spurning of Parmelia was to be the first self-initiated act of his life, his first originality.

He scuffled up on the front porch. She had been awaiting him in a saggy hammock from which she leaped at his approach. She declared that she was startled, whereas she had heard his feet scraping the cement for almost a block.

Parmelia was a clinging maiden, a girl who would have given so much to be pretty and might have accomplished the desired result with the wealthy girl's *toilette* and some highly paid taste. She was satisfied with Cassius because he had promised that they would live in a yellow cottage with a front porch, side porch, back porch, and dome light above the dining-room table. But this was a frail bubble of a dream and he knew it. He placed his yellow straw hat on the railing, and then his feet.

She drew up a chair and they were soon chatting in a summer-night-on-the-porch undertone—that is, Parmelia was chatting, while Cassius preserved an

ominous silence except for a perfunctory "Uh-huh" or unintelligible murmur now and then.

"Cassius."

He knew that she was about to ask for an assurance of his devotion. It was her constant question and he had always said "Yes." To-night he planned to deny a whole year of yeses, but was aware that her clinging presence at his side had melted some of the brittleness from his resolve.

"Cassius," she repeated, and leaned over in his direction just a little. "I read in a book to-day that sometimes men change very suddenly. Are you sure, Cassius, that you will never, never, be any different?"

He settled in his chair and crossed one foot over the other. She knew that he was not exactly normal. Feminine tact came to the front. "Let's walk," she suggested.

Whenever Cassius Coddington walked he had to smoke; he lit a cigar. Then Parmelia took his arm, thereby making a colossal blunder. He was tired of this hanging on to him, body and soul. After they had walked a few blocks Cassius determined that at the next corner he would voice himself. She was speaking and he couldn't interrupt. At the end of the next block his courage balked. They came to the river and stood on the disused wharf. Far off was the slightest hint of thunder and the ferry whistle which came out of the night sounded soggy and oppressed.

"It's going to rain," announced Parmelia. And Cassius said, "Yes, wouldn't be surprised if it did." They hurried away and reached the front porch just as a few big drops came spattering down on the walk. They stood close together on the top step, each waiting for the other to speak; neither did. He couldn't tell her now. By George, it would be awkward. He would do it to-morrow. The spattering continued and by this time the hints had developed into real thunder. With a good-night mumble he started to go and she recalled him.

"Cassius," she said, "it may seem silly to speak of it right now, but I want your photograph. You have promised hundreds of times and have never had it taken. I read in a book to-day—"

He turned up his coat collar and said something to the effect that he would oblige her with a photograph if she really wished. He agreed to call the next night, and hurried away through the rain.

All the way back he meditated on his failure. He finally decided that he could never tell her boldly; it would be too difficult to introduce the subject. He must make the announcement in some subtle fashion. "Yes, I've got to be sly," he pondered, "pretty sly." When his simple mind was groping for something which smacked of originality he heard the conductor call his street and got out.

The shower had been brief and had now ceased altogether, giving a cool, fresh odor to the heat-oppressed city. They say that human beings, like moths, are drawn by the light; and Cassius was no butterfly—just an average human moth. Across the street was the intense blue glow of the novelty photograph shop. Parmelia's parting request came to his mind and he crossed over to the store. After gazing carelessly at the revolving strips of pictures in the window, his attention was drawn by the great glaring placard which occupied the center of the display:

LATEST
PHOTOGRAPHIC NOVELTY
FOOL YOUR FRIENDS
25 cents—FADING PHOTOS—25 cents
The face Disappears in Curious Sections—Guaranteed to Vanish Completely in One Week!

He read it again. He studied it. Then it came—his second original idea. He marched in without delay and inquired of the lady at the counter. Work? Sure, always works. Place it on the table thus. In a single day the devilment begins.

Then, this in a half-whispered confidence: "One might suspect that spirits were at work. Not really of course. A trick of science. Wonderful thing, science!" Cassius's eyes sparkled.

"Right that way," directed the woman. He passed smilingly into the little room from which the blue light emanated. He sat half-consciously in the little bronze ice-cream-parlor chair until the slick-haired man with the big nose had snapped his picture. He ordered two and was told to call for them the next day. He went home directly, exulting in his idea.

During the next day two patrons of Chair No. 3 were sacrificed to the cause of originality by cruel cuts on the chin. After work Cassius called for the pictures, which were fair likenesses on cheap mounts. Every atom of him tingled with expectation. A hasty supper and he was off much earlier than usual for the North End.

Love bounced from the hammock, all clad in fluffy white; and he thought that she was more than ordinarily attractive, which was no idle speculation. For the moment he felt cruel and unjust, but he had gone too far to turn back. The stuffy, perfumed chamber of love was too narrow and his perspiring little heart yearned for freedom. He sat in the creaky rocking-chair and Parmelia took her accustomed station at his side.

"I've done it," he said abruptly.

"Done what?" she asked, really frightened.

"What you wanted," he explained; "had my picture taken."

He took one of the prints from his pocket and tossed it into her lap. She took it to the screened window and subjected it to a close examination by the light which came from the inside of the house.

"Say, Cassius, but that's swell!" she exclaimed. "I like that chin. You've got one of the swellest chins I ever saw. And your nose is so good-looking," she added with something of a giggle. "That's the best part of your face, Cassius, that nose."

She was partly sincere, for considering them individually, Cassius Coddington's nose and chin were no worse than other noses and chins. If Cassius were not handsome it would certainly be wrong for one to blame the nose or chin.

"It ain't much, 'Melia," he managed to say with affected modesty. "Why, in a week it won't be anything." There was the diplomatic stroke—"in a week it won't be anything."

Parmelia sat beside him again and placed her hand on the arm of his chair. There was a pause and he knew what she was about to say. "You know, Cassius, that I have funny ideas sometimes and you mustn't be angry if I always ask the same question. Are you sure, sure, sure that you love me?"

He had been waiting for this question and the answer was ready, for he had rehearsed it. These were the words that had crept into his mind when he first saw the sign in the shop window. They constituted his second original idea. He spoke with a little guilty huskiness:

"Parmelia, my love will last as long as that there picture."

She replied innocently that under such conditions his love would endure forever. He felt weak and uncomfortable. Although it was ridiculously early he stood to go. She implored him to stay, but he was firm. Furthermore, he made the startling announcement that he could not see her for a week and by that time she would understand. Understand what? No, he couldn't explain. She would understand. Humanly she sought illumination, begged for it, but he backed down the steps. Half way to the corner he turned and thought he saw a fluffy whiteness on the porch, a radiant fluffy whiteness.

His first feelings were those of remorse, but these were replaced quickly enough by an egotistical sense of his

diplomacy. When he went to work in the morning he placed his likeness on the table, regarded it with his head tilted to one side and chuckled. The day was not marred by any atrocious nipping of chins, but it was a day of severe anxiety. When the shop closed he hurried home without supper.

He burst into the room, snatched up the photograph from the table and took it to the window. Yes, it was vanishing all right. But see! He didn't think it would work out that way exactly. He sat on the edge of the bed and huddled over it worriedly. His chin, his swell chin, had completely vanished! It was this very chin that she had admired so much. "If it could only have been some other part of me," he complained and was engulfed in a great ocean of remorse. He looked again. Yes, the lower part of his face had completely evaporated.

Cassius left the house and walked for more than an hour through the crowds of unsympathetic people who poured out into the hot streets and to the levees to avoid the greater hotness of their rooms. Finally he passed through a dark side thoroughfare to his own rooming-house. He looked again at the peculiar photograph, shook his head dejectedly and lay down with a sad perspiring face and drooping heart. "Funny thing, science," he mused as he lay there. Eventually he dozed.

The razor was an uncertain object in his hands next day and when the shop curtain was drawn at quitting time he hurried home to find what part of his face was lacking. He guessed as much —his good-looking nose. To be sure, a trace of it still remained, but it had lost its essential parts. By this time Parmelia understood and hated him.

The following day, the third epoch of his epochal week, was akin to failure. When the last patron had been sent sprayed and perfumed from the chair, he hung his starched white coat over the headrest, threw his street coat over his arm and sped home to find himself earless. About all that remained now was his bald head studded with his little eyes. The thing was uncanny. All night the eyes peered at him in the darkness.

For two days more the head and eyes lingered on. The woman's suggestion about spirits always came sneaking into his mind. Surely no science could dissolve his features so devilishly. The spirit idea possessed him and spiritland sent its most grotesque inhabitants to his bedside. Weak in body and mind it was easy for him to distinguish their most striking details. In the heart of the night he heard his name whispered and valiantly hurled a wadded quilt at a whole troop of them. He leaped from bed and turned on the light. He stood there blinking and gulping in a cold sweat. Over on the table was his single remaining organ.

All Parmelia had of him was an eye!

Cassius often thought of destroying the picture, but there was a peculiar fascination about its qualities and he wanted to be certain when Parmelia's copy was entirely faded, assuming that both copies worked alike. Next day, the last period in the photographical week, he often paused with the hair tonic bottle aloft and blinked vacantly. In the middle of the afternoon he looked ghastly pale and felt entirely unresponsible. He complained that he was ill, which nobody denied, and went home two hours early with a scowl from the proprietor, who operated Chair No. 1.

Rushing into the disordered room, Cassius seized the picture from the table. The card was a blank. All of him was gone. The torture suddenly snapped and through his nervous little body there rushed a cool stream of remorse. He was aware of an intense redawning of love for Parmelia. He slept from weariness and when he awoke it was early evening. He turned on the light and gazed into the mirror.

"You're not over-smart, Cassius," asserted the reflection.

A North End car picked him up and took him through the various stratas of the city, and finally to the dark factory stratum of hammocks and love and smoke and toil.

Parmelia was on the porch and when he came up on the steps she spoke the absolute truth when she said she was startled.

"Cassius!" she said, with an unmistakable note of joy.

He was too ashamed and bewildered to be anything but mumbling in his reply. He seated himself in the rocker and Parmelia sat beside him. Her hand came to the arm of the chair—and into Cassius's hand.

"I haven't done right, have I?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "you should have come to me much more quickly."

"But the photo, where is that?" he inquired weakly.

"The photo?" she questioned.

"Yes," he explained, entirely mystified, "the one I gave you, where is it?" She was regarding it as a trifle. He didn't comprehend.

"Oh, I hate to tell you that."

"But is it gone," he insisted, "the nose and the chin?"

"No, silly, I didn't mutilate it as much as that."

"Mutilate?" He was exasperated.

As an answer, she had drawn from somewhere a huge, old-fashioned locket. "There, if you've got to know," she explained tartly, "I clipped out just the face and put it in mother's old locket."

"And it hasn't been exposed," he inquired anxiously, "exposed to the light?"

Into her mind there floated an inspiration. It was sentimental, but it was inspirational: "It has been exposed only to the light of love."

Then he felt it coming, surging, swelling, pressing upward—a great tingling which crept through his whole body and spilled radiance into all the cells of his brain—his third original idea.

"In such a light," he said, "it can never, never fade."

There is a lot of tobacco produced in this country, but the fellow who lets his smoke blow in your face never seems to run across any of it.—*Luke McLuke.*

The kisses which a man most regrets are those he might have taken and didn't.—*Helen Rowland.* *Copyright by the Wheeler Syndicate.*

An exchange professor says that education has passed from a luxury to a necessity. Then nobody will want it.—*New York Evening Post.*

A PANGLIMA TRAGEDY

By LEONARD WOOD, Jr.

NN DRISCOL stood in the bow of the little army transport, Liscum, watching the tiny town of Panglima on Mindanao grow larger and larger as the ship approached it. To her, the town looked like so many nipa and bamboo shacks, built up out of the water on poles, except for a few dark green, red-roofed bungalows. These were on the farther side of the town, and she presumed them to be the quarters in the army post. In the rear of the village, rose lofty, jungle-clad hills. Certainly Panglima did not seem to offer a very alluring place for a bride to spend the first years of her married life.

Ann had no sooner married Captain Albert Driscol than his regiment was ordered to the Philippines. She had never hoped to visit the Islands, especially the island of Mindanao, for it had been here, that five years previous, her first husband, Lieutenant Richard Berry, had been killed in a fight with the Moros. His body, like those of many others, had never been found. Ann was not in the islands when the disaster occurred. Her husband was to have sent for her later, when Moro Land become more peaceful. So it was but natural that the scenery and the realization of where she was, forced unpleasant thoughts into her mind.

"If I can feel the way I do to-day about Dick," she murmured to herself, "I—I don't think I should have married Albert; it wasn't fair to him."

She had known Albert Driscol since she was a young girl. They had been school-day sweethearts. Later, when he was at West Point, she had been "dragged" by him to several of the hops. When he graduated he was sent to Alaska, and for four years they did not see each other. It was during this time that Ann met Berry. From the start, he appealed to her in a different way than Driscol had, and it wasn't long before they married. Then five years later, after Berry's death, when Driscol asked her to marry him, she had accepted without hesitation, for she felt that she would be under the protection of a man who had for her the combined qualities of a brother and a dear and tried friend.

"Ann, dear, why not come up on deck with the other passengers?" It was her husband who spoke. The sound of his voice clashed noisily for a moment with her thoughts.

"Why, I like it better down here," she tried to smile. "I love to watch the water play around the bow."

He noticed a tear resting on one of her long, black eyelashes—those exquisite, languorous eyelashes which shadowed Spanish eyes. "I hope," he began awkwardly, "that you are not letting yourself think of—"

"Albert, please!" she begged, unable to hear hearing him utter what had been in her mind of late and gnawing at her soul. The surroundings were having a most unpleasant psychological effect on her.

"Remember, dear," he spoke kindly, almost weighing each word, "when you promised—"

"Oh, don't!" she shuddered, "I know I am not playing fair with you, when I allow thoughts of him to enter my mind

She paused a moment and swept a hand toward the white-beached, volcanic land. "But look—look where we are!"

"I was a brute to have brought you here!" exclaimed her husband.

"No, you weren't, Albert," she assured him, taking one of his hands affectionately. "Do you think that I would have stayed behind this time?"

He did not answer her but, slipping her arm into his, led her up on deck. Here, in the cheery company of the wives of some of the offcers of the three infantry companies to be stationed at Panglima, unpleasant memories soon fled from her.

It was an hour later, and ten o'clock in the morning, when the Liscum docked at the town's rickety little pier. Immediately, sleepy, tropical Panglima awoke with a start. Three companies of the eighteenth infantry, had to be aboard by that evening, in order to make room on shore for the newcomers. Consequently, there began much unloading; and from the pier there arose a babble of different tongues, for it was thronged with Moros, soldiers, Filipinos, and one or two civilians, clad in immaculate white duck.

Ann was quite excited over it all. She found the town far from attractive with its nipa shacks and dusty, filthy streets, filled with half-naked children, pigs and chickens. But the garrison, with its trim parade ground, around which were the guard house, the soldiers' quarters and the officers' bungalows, quite appealed to her. She found their little home-to-be cosy and attractive; in front of the house there was a huge betel nut tree, and in the rear, was a beautiful sandy beach. But in spite of certain pleasant features, the whole place had a barren appearance. The sun seemed to scorch everything relentlessly. Even the blue, shimmering sea seemed coated with sunshine, which dazzled Ann unpleasantly.

By five o'clock that evening she was very tired from the hard day she had spent. In spite of her endeavors and those of her Filipino *muchacho* and Chinese cook to get the house in order, it was strewn with trunks, half-unpacked boxes, wood shavings, and uncomfortable-looking, mosquito-netted army beds, in their wrong place.

Disgusted with the condition of her new home, she strolled out on the beach. It was quite delightful outdoors now, as the sun was setting, and a delicious, velvet breeze was blowing. She noticed the Liscum slowly edging away from the dock, and at that moment she heard a loud cheer arise from the men on board. They were going home—back to the States!—via Manila, after three long years in Panglima; and already she felt that she could appreciate their joy.

But within a month Ann was becoming thoroughly acclimated. The heat no longer bothered her much, in fact not so much as it did her husband; but then, he was light and she dark. Thoughts of the past now seldom forced their unwelcome way into her mind. She was beginning to feel for Albert something more than the love of a sister or a good friend. She had always felt sure this would come in time, for she had no faith in platonic love. Time did not hang heavily on her hands, for in the cool of early morning there was tennis or riding, and in the late afternoon, the best bathing she had ever experienced. She was really beginning to enjoy life here, when fear intruded upon this happiness.

A number of mysterious robberies had been committed recently in the town of Panglima. The latter being a small place, excitement of any sort spread rapidly, and in spreading, developed with equal rapidity. Whether the robbers, or *ladrones*, were Filipinos or Moros was not known. The local *policia* were instructed to show their value to the community by capturing the *ladrones*, it being too petty an affair for the regulars.

One night, a theft occurred in the post. The robbers were very daring to risk themselves within the carefully paroled boundaries of the garrison; and the realization of this made Panglima buzz. But the climax came one night when two masked Filipinos held up a China store.

On the following day, Major Watts, the commandant of the post (it was too small for a colonel), gave orders for the soldiers to go after the *ladrones* that afternoon. And Captain Driscol's company was chosen for the skirmish. This news filled Ann with an almost unconquerable fear for her husband's safety. Again she was experiencing the anxiety which a soldier's wife sooner or later invariably undergoes. But like a soldier's wife she kept her fear to herself.

Fortunately, or at least, so Ann considered it, the news that the Moros forty miles down the coast, had sacked a Filipino village, was the cause which immediately demanded the garrison's attention instead of the *ladrones*. Major Watts recalled his order to Captain Driscol, and leaving him in charge of the post, he himself set out after the Moros, with two of the companies. Ann felt that her husband had been spared from death.

The *ladrones* must have heard news of their impending danger, and fled back into the hills immediately upon receiving it, or decided to let things cool off a bit in Panglima, because for two weeks the town rested peacefully. But the times were not quiet. News was constantly being received of the encounters Major Watts was having with the Moros. Men were being killed, and the thought of this drove Ann back into her old mood. She realized that these poor men who were killed might have wives back in the States—barely more than brides, whose lives were wrapped up in their love for their husbands.

One day, news came to Panglima that the Moros had killed eleven men, and wounded eighteen. Driscol tried to keep Ann from hearing it, but within two hours, she knew most of the particulars of the disaster, for bad news has no barriers.

That night Ann could not sleep. She lay awake thinking of the awfulness of war. The direful excitement of the last fortnight had seemed to chill her toward everyone. She felt void of any definite feelings. A cloud of aversion and pity seemed to enwrap her. War, she realized, was inevitable so long as men have backbones. Several times she tried to go to sleep, but unsuccessfully.

How calm and silent the world outside her house seemed. And in other places, she knew, havoc was running rampant. The only sounds which reached her ears were those of a guard's footsteps, as he passed the house at regular intervals, the noise of the flapping wings of huge bats in the betal nut tree, and the weird "bong-bong-bong, bong-bong-bong," of the tom-toms from the Moro section of Panglima.

Suddenly, an abrupt noise, much nearer at hand, attracted her attention. Her nerves tingled. She listened breathlessly. Several faint noises followed, and it sounded as if someone was moving cautiously in the parlor.

Deciding to inform her husband of her suspicion, she gently lifted the mosquito-netting and climbed out of bed. Only two nights before, she had had him search the house for an intruder, who turned out to be none other than her pet monkey. "Perhaps it is that little rascal again!" she thought, pausing half way across the room and looking toward the slightly open door of the parlor. "I'll take a peek and see," she decided, and tiptoed to the door. She paused a moment to listen. Not a sound. Carefully, she peered through the opening. In the heaven there was a three-quarters moon, which cast fantastic shadows about the room. Into each shadow she looked narrowly, but saw

nothing unusual. She longed for electric lights, so that she could flood the room with light. Then she lit the candle by her bed, and with it, went fearlessly into the parlor, quietly calling the monkey by name.

"Quiet! Blow out that candle!" said a voice behind her.

With a start, she dropped the candle on the table, the light going out. Fearing she might be shot, she remained both motionless and silent. But finally, as the stranger did not speak, she quavered in as loud a voice as she dared, hoping to waken her husband:

"What are you doing here?"

"For God's sake, not so loud!" the intruder cautioned in a low voice.

"I will call for help if you don't leave immediately!"

Ann heard the faint patter of bare feet coming toward her. Trembling she clutched the table.

"Shut up!" the stranger ordered.

"Who are you?" Then something which swept over her in a blaze of misgiving, made her command.

"Speak!"

"Oh, Lord!" he gasped. "I—I didn't believe it was you, Ann, but I had to make sure!"

In one agonizing flash, she recognized the voice. Her body became limp and she fell forward upon the table, and would have slipped like a rag to the floor, if he had not caught her.

"Dick!" she moaned. "Dick!" clenching his sleeve in a death-like grip.

For a moment Richard Berry was seized with the desire to place her on the table and flee. But he had spoken in the excitement of the moment, and she had recognized his voice, and knew he was alive. He would stay for a few moments and then go; for she must never see him—or rather, *it*.

"Call—call Albert," she softly moaned. "I'm too weak."

"No, Ann, we mustn't call anyone," he entreated.

Gaining a little more control of herself, she tottered to the table, and with head hanging forward, half sat there. He stood motionless, as if paralyzed. Several minutes passed, during which neither spoke, but both grappled mentally with the situation.

"Light the lamp," she pleaded. "I want to see you."

"No!"

"Why?" she asked nervously.

"I can't tell you, dearest."

"'Dearest!'" she repeated chokingly. "Oh, Dick," her voice was barely more than a whisper, "they told me you had been killed. It's all been too dreadful!" But as he was unable to answer, she continued.

"You'll—you'll forgive me for what I have innocently done?"

"I am the same as dead," he replied bitterly; "but what have you done?"

"Why—oh, don't make me say it," she sobbed.

Almost instantly, he demanded.

"Who is Albert?" But as she did not answer, the truth dawned upon him.

"Ann!"

"But why, Dick, why didn't you let me know you were alive?"

"Because—" he started to explain, but his voice failed him. "I can't tell you. I can't!"

"How thoughtless you were, Dick!"

"Thoughtless!" he repeated in a hurt voice. "If you but knew the battle I had to fight to reach a decision as to what I had best do, you wouldn't accuse me of being thoughtless."

"Oh, I don't mean to accuse you," she said softly, coming over to him.

"We're together now and nothing else matters." They were silent for a few moments, during which he gripped her passionately. "Dick," her voice quivered, "take me in your arms; I want to be near you!"

"Oh, that I might!" he choked.

"Why, what do you mean?" she asked, bewildered. Then quickly, she ques-

tioned: "Dearest, why are you here? You came to me, didn't you? Tell me that, Dick! Tell me!"

"I didn't know you were even in the Islands," he forced himself to say the truth. "I love you too much to have come here with the purpose of seeing you; and I love you too much even to—" He didn't finish the sentence; he couldn't. He held her off at arms' length, bathing her face in a streamlet of moonlight. Her eyes were dilated and she was trembling.

"Kiss me, love, kiss me," she murmured. Then she struggled to get close to his body. She felt the clutch on her arms tighten and she longed for him to crush her against him.

"Ann, this isn't fair to either."

"Dick! Dick!" she spoke deliriously. "We're together, dear, together!" Her old love for the first man she had given herself to was breaking forth into flame.

"This must stop," he muttered grimly. "Ann, I'm going!"

"Going!" she echoed in surprise. "No!"

"Yes; because you must never know of the terrible thing that has overtaken me."

"You shan't go!" she exclaimed; whereupon she hurled herself at him. He seized her fiercely and tried to wrench her from him. But the divine fire burning in her, doubled her strength, and she clung to him like a half-mad creature. "Albert!" she cried, "Albert!"

"Ann! Ann! for your own good, let me go!" pleaded Berry.

"Dick stop! I don't understand," she sobbed in a loud voice. "Albert, help me!" she screamed.

A deafening noise roared through the room.

Ann suddenly felt Dick's strength dwindle. He tottered from her and crumpled to the floor.

"Ann," whispered the wounded man, "don't—don't look at me in the light."

But his last wish was not to be granted, for Driscol, after firing, had lit the lamp and held it over the dead man.

With a cry, Ann cowered back, covering her eyes. The rays of light on Richard Berry's face had shown her a huge festering spot on one cheek.

"A leper!" gasped Driscol.

CAPTAIN ALBERT DRISCOL sat alone on the veranda of his house, wistfully watching the sun set behind two tiny islands.

"Senor Capitan," said his Filipino *muchacho,* coming out on the porch, "the mail from the steamer, here it is."

"Gracias Feliciano," muttered Driscol absently, as he took the mail. His attitude immediately changed to one of eagerness, as he recognized Ann's familiar writing:

"El Rancho, Solito, Calif.

Dear Albert:

I wrote you last from Honolulu. I am sorry I was unable to send you a letter from San Francisco; but the sight of that dear city recalled memories which were most distressing.

Albert, I know it all now about poor Dick. I read an article in the Army and Navy Gossip, which said that when he discovered he had leprosy (must have got it in 1900 in China, for, as perhaps you know, it takes a number of years to break out) he fled to the mountains to live his own life in freedom, and not in some leper prison. It is said that he made it appear as if he had been killed in a fight with the Moros, so that I might have my sorrow and *get over it.* The veracity of all this, the Gossip says, is based upon the confession of a captive *ladron.* The rest, Albert, about Dick's taking to *vino,* going to pieces to the extent of joining a band of *ladrones,* in order to support himself, I refuse to believe.

Write me soon, Albert. What a dreadful unknown hypocrisy our marriage was!

Ann."

CONSERVATIVE SAM

By HENRY FRANCIS DRYDEN

N undersized, rat-faced man, appeared in Barkley the first of June, and having through Sam P. Ross rented a tiny apartment on Shay Avenue, with a sleeping-deck and kitchenette, he started canvassing the offices with his line of stationery, loose-leaf binders and samples of lithographing and engraving.

For a month he drummed the business section regularly, from Mondays to Saturdays, calling many times at every bank, hotel and store in town and making the acquaintance of only unprofitable people.

During the month, he had taken orders for a few sales which invoiced less than his own board bill. The profit was not large. It had been so for almost a month, and now the business—to him—held no promise for the future. He packed the samples of engraving and lithographing, loose-leaf binders and stationery in his leather bag when he returned to his quarters. He then started for the office of Sam P. Ross. Many conversations with the conscienceless Mr. Ross had convinced the rat-faced man that Sam P. was now a "prospect" for another line of endeavor.

Mr. Ross's office was on a vacant corner lot on Shay Avenue. It was a portable shell, of corrugated iron, which might be taken apart and removed to some other location. with neatness and dispatch. A wide board inside, from wall to wall, made a counter. His furniture consisted of one stool and a redwood cabinet, stuffed with papers. On the day of his arrival, the rat-faced man had included Mr. Ross's office in his canvass—with no profitable results—but he had continued to call in undismayed persistence. Sociability was the undersized man's forte, so his manner had become more or less familiar. To-day he took Ross into his confidence, as he began:

"I'm a sucker, Sam. I ought to go after the big money. I wanted to play fair when I came here; and I'd do it now if this dump you call home offered any premiums for honesty. I used to think: 'You can sell *some* of anything!' —for you do see houses manufacturing a lot of useless junk and getting rid of it; but stationery—" He straightened up and glared so that his beady eyes made him look more rat-faced than ever. "By George! it's worse than trying to sell Ferris-wheels. But maybe I haven't got salesman's magnetism."

He lolled across the counter and seemed to make a mental estimate of his listener, fanning himself the while with a sailor hat of closely woven straw. A gray tweed suit accentuated his youthful outlines. His voice was high and whining, cutting the silence of the little room, except when he paused to puff vigorously at a fat cigar.

"Here's a proposition, Sam," he continued, extending an index finger: "I can dig up some bonds—phoney—but bonds. I've got the plates in my grip, made 'em myself. Bonds look good to all conservative people, especially bankers. I might offer to sell some of them, but that's a stale chestnut. Nobody wants to buy any green-goods. That game has been worked to a frazzle. But

a banker will jump at a collection, or a loan when it's secured by bonds, if you offer him a one-day note at eight per cent and sign his collateral agreement." He cocked the sailor on one side of his head.

"Now I'm a failure on the straight and narrow, Sam. I've traveled that path here for a month and I almost owe myself money; haven't made the eats as a salesman. It's a hard grind! Now you real estate sharks, sit around doing nothing for six months; then some grocer decides that he wants to be a farmer, and some rube thinks he'd be happier as a grocery-man. They swap —and you take five per cent from each of them. It's pretty soft, eh? Nothing to do for another six months! That's *your* graft!"

He ducked through the door and read the sign: "ROSS—REAL ESTATE." "But I never had time to get established in that kind of game. I went to Chicago when I was a kid and took a job in a machine factory. After a while I could assemble either a cash-register or an adding machine with the parts, and make 'em add, too! Then I went out on the road as a repairman—handling the service department for different agents, wherever the company sent me. It was lots of fun getting acquainted with the bartenders and the chorus-girls nights, and talking shop to bookkeepers all day, but I quit to go to work for a lithographing and engraving concern. After a while I went into the big offices and banks, figuring on lithographed stuff or estimating engraving costs for bonds and stocks; and I had a chance to observe the bankers and lawyers and promoters.

"Then I noticed from the talk I heard, that a banker will walk away from you when you say stock—unless it's a well-known, listed corporation paper; but a municipal bond gets his interest right off the reel.

"The engravers used to cop off a few extra blanks, when we had a bond job on for a municipality, and hold them out for some conservative victim. I guess they supplied the signatures and left behind them dozens of ~~fifty~~ year bonds that'll surprise some conservative investors when maturity-day comes.

"I've had my cut out of plenty of schemes, but all of them conservative like the bond-loan trick. They're the easiest, because the cautious banker, as a rule, takes more things for granted than the most careless rube. You can get him to accept a piece of wrapping-paper if it's printed like a municipal bond.

"Now I've lost interest in the small-profit drags. Making the big money easily has spoiled me for piker jobs. Bankers make me feel worse about it. Read their advertisements: 'Save your money!' Every time I read it, I feel like framing another bond-loan on some conservative banker. Municipal bonds will get these guys every time.

"If I had the dough to get by with, I'd beat it for Wall Street with the plates I've got, but I'm almost on my uppers, so I'm ready to put one over on some ultraconservative financier. 'It's a fine game when it's played right,' as the golfers say, and it takes the conceit out of him when maturity-day comes.

"Now I'm back to the proposition. I hate to do it—it's so easy—but I'm loser on this town and I'm anxious to break even before I go. I need another man, so I'm inviting you in on it, if you're game, and I think you are. You introduce me at your bank and I'll borrow some money on the phoney bonds. Whatever I get on them will be all velvet; so count yourself in for half the money I borrow from your conservative banker."

Sam P. Ross had sat inscrutable and motionless on his stool while the high-pitched voice of his visitor whined out this story. Now that it was concluded, he cleared his throat twice. He was a broad-shouldered, athletic man, past fif-

ty, his tough face and neck seamed with deep wrinkles, thick-skinned, with coarse stubble underneath—the dull hue of a crabshell after it has been scalded with boiling water. His eyes were deep-set and almost hidden by shaggy, over-hanging brows. He wore a tan Norfolk suit, a negligee shirt, and a Windsor tie that hung in a limp, blue drape.

He was a spider-like person, motionless, then moving abruptly. His only pleasures in life were squeezed out of the sharp practices, at which, so far, he had never been detected. He handled subdivisions, sold houses and lots and conducted a rental business in the little office, rent free, on the land of one of his clients.

At the Commercial and Savings Bank his account was a valued one; here he carried a substantial balance—subject to check. He might have placed the money in a savings' account, drawing four per cent interest; but Sam had accumulated this money since his arrival, a year before, by methods which might make his immediate departure advisable at any time. So he restrained the desire to make interest on a savings' account which could not be withdrawn without thirty days' notice.

Sam was unscrupulous at heart, yet he was a very careful man. Propositions had to be demonstrated when submitted to him. If he saw even a remote chance of losing his part of an investment, it never interested him further. Had the rat-face man invited him to share in some expenses of financing his scheme, Sam would have called for the police; but this safe and easy proposal—that he merely furnish an introduction at the bank—appealed to him instantly.

He cleared his throat again, smoothed down his Windsor tie with a hairy paw, and jerked his swinging feet up to the highest rounds on both sides of the stool on which he was perched.

"What," he said, his voice sounding monotonous, like that of a ticket-agent who answers the same question many times, "what do you intend to tell them at the bank?" He was waiting to know how much risk would be incurred on his part, should he lend his personality to the stranger.

"Well, first you introduce me," the rat-faced man replied, the high-pitched voice whining down to a low purr, "introduce me as a client, 'rented an apartment about a week ago'—and then you can bow yourself out.

"I tell 'em I'm going to locate here with a stationery and printing business. They always welcome a new account, so I offer to make a deposit and get a passbook in jig time.

"Then I ask the cashier if he will send some securities to his New York correspondent, to be held in escrow or represented by an interim certificate, until my investment broker can find a buyer.

"The rest is easy. The cashier always asks what they are, and I tell him municipals in denominations of five hundred dollars. Then he asks what the name of the bond is and I describe them: 'Springfield sixes, maturing in nineteen fifty—thirty-three years more to run.' Cashiers are all alike. I've hooked 'em before. His bond rate table will show him that on the present market—that is, a four-and-a-half per cent basis—my bonds are worth six hundred and thirty dollars apiece; but he thinks I don't know that. He'll offer me a little premium, and I'll tell him I'm a thousand times obliged and accept.

"When my account gets credit for the proceeds, I draw the money, cut it up with you fifty-fifty, and beat it. Suppose he don't offer to buy? All right. A few days later I'll ask him for a loan; but the first way's better, because it fetches more cash. The banker won't know the bonds are phoney for thirty-three years. It's a cinch! Give me a conservative banker every time. Easy! It's a shame to take the money."

Mr. Ross abruptly dangled his feet again, pulling the while at two bent forefingers, hooked together across his chest, and pondering with keen interest—not at all sure that he would lend his aid to this rat-faced individual's iniquitous plot, yet carefully considering the risk he would incur should he eliminate the stranger and float this paper himself. Why not make all of this money? Why divide? He was slyly thinking, however, that he would first see the trick demonstrated in a small way. Then, if it failed, he would be free from any suspicion and would be praised for his acumen in escaping the snares of a swindler. But if it worked—well—why not take advantage of the rat-faced man's confidence and get the stuff away from him? He would have it on him! He wouldn't dare to squeal! So motionless, but with an alert mind, Mr. Ross said in a monotonous voice:

"Go get your securities! We'll go up to the Commercial and Savings Bank!"

When the undersized schemer had tripped out, Mr. Ross uncramped his dangling legs and snatched a check-book out of the redwood cabinet. He noted its balance—twenty-five hundred dollars—his net earnings of the past year in this peaceful community. A year, he was thinking; why not make that much in a much shorter time? How long would it take him to shape his affairs for a departure—with all bridges burned behind him? The calculation seemed, somehow, to bolster his confidence.

"I've been here long enough!" he thought. "Why not ditch this rummy, clean up, and make a get-away?"

Standing on the front sidewalk, a half hour later, his gaze wandered to a youthful figure in gray tweeds, hurrying in the direction of the corrugated-iron office. Not for a second had his thoughts left that rat-face since he last saw it. Sam had reached a decision as to his own main chance. So he stalked angularly back into the little office, ducked under the board counter, perched himself on the stool once more, cleared his throat twice—and waited.

"Here they are, Sam," piped the undersized man, whining less than usual and breathing quickly from the exertion of a brisk walk, as he darted in. The white straw hat was tilted back and he was unfastening the only button on the gray tweed coat. From the inner coat pocket he produced six crisp, neatly-folded documents—green engravings on tough, translucent paper—and laid five of them on the counter, carefully unfolding the sixth, which he had retained for Sam's inspection, saying:

"Half a dozen, Sam. Five hundred apiece."

The bonds, issued in nineteen hundred, were signed by the mayor and treasurer of the city of Springfield. Mr. Ross examined the open document closely, not only reading carefully every printed word, but crinkling the paper and holding the parchment against the light, in search of some water-mark. When at length he folded the bond and handed it back to the rat-faced man, his hand was clutching the other five. Silently, he transferred them to the redwood cabinet—which he locked, pocketing the key.

"What's the idea?" asked the undersized man, in some astonishment.

Mr. Ross reached for his hat precipitately.

"They're safe there," he said, in his usual monotone; "come on up to the bank."

Shortly, at the Commercial and Savings Bank, Harry Duncan, at the cashier's desk, was saying:

"Well, sir, since you intend to sell these bonds—"

"I certainly do, sir. When I go into the stationery business, I must purchase stock and equipment, and that will take—"

"I was going to say, sir," smiled Harry Duncan, bowing, "that you—well, you could sell *us* this bond. Would you care to consider an offer? We would give you

credit at once—or you could take the cash—so as to get your business started without delay." He consulted a book of rate tables. "We—we will buy it and pay you a premium of one hundred dollars. That would make six hundred dollars available in cash."

The rat-faced man nudged Mr. Ross with his elbow.

"That will be satisfactory," said the new customer. "I have more of these bonds in my safe-deposit box, but will not need any more money on them for the present."

"It's good paper," said the cashier. "Bring it in when you're ready."

And being in no mind to waste his valuable time, the rat-faced man took the cash and departed forthwith, linking his arm in Sam's and leading him away with him.

A few minutes later, having reached the corrugated-iron office, Ross lumbered under the counter again, faced his grinning companion, but did not return his complacent smile. The rat-faced man was the first to speak.

"Pretty soft, eh?" he whined. "That conservative banker thinks he made thirty dollars on me." He counted three hundred dollars off the roll of bills. "You're entitled to half, Sam," he drawled, "and you'd better hand me back the other five bonds. That cabinet's no protection. Somebody might frisk you."

Mr. Ross blinked twice, but made no move to comply with this request. His voice was as monotonous as usual, but a little husky now.

"I'll keep 'em," he said, clearing his throat, "and I'll give you six hundred dollars to shut up and skin out."

The rat-faced man was evidently astounded. His tenor voice cut the air in strident objection.

"Whatta ya mean, six hundred? Our agreement was half and half!"

Still motionless, as if there had been no unusual proposal, Mr. Ross replied:

"I listened to your story, but I didn't accept your offer—nor reject it either, then. He cleared his throat again. "You couldn't have done it without my introduction, so I'm rejecting your proposal and offering you my terms, now." He fished out a roll of bills from a money-belt, which he wore inside his shirt, fastened the white pearl buttons and smoothed down the Windsor tie; he counted the money awkwardly and continued: "My half of the bond sale you made at the bank is three hundred dollars, under our tentative agreement; here's three hundred more to make up your share under our subsequent agreement—six hundred—and I keep the bonds, or report you to the police."

Understanding from the redundancy of this shocking offer that the first proposal was no mere joke on Mr. Ross's part, the rat-faced man glared for a moment like one suddenly gone mad.

"Bilked!" he shrilled, in outraged amazement. He bit an inch off the end of his fat cigar and spat the tobacco on Mr. Ross's floor, but Mr. Ross, in a reproving tone replied:

"Duncan gave you six hundred, and I'm handing you three hundred more—a pretty good day's work, I'll say."

"Only twenty-five per cent of thirty-six hundred," whined the rat-faced man unhappily; "we were to divide fifty-fifty."

He tilted the white sailor and mopped the perspiration from his forehead. Mr. Ross's hairy finger pointed a silent answer, by indicating the pile of money on the counter. The under-sized man was getting out his wallet.

"You've got me roped and hog-tied," he said despondently. "I've gotta take it."

In silence, Mr. Ross watched him clutch the bills in his right hand, while with the left he drew the wallet from his inner coat pocket, tucked the money away, and returned the wallet to an inner vest pocket. His beady eyes gleamed with insulted egotism.

"I've turned tricks with dips, and even yeggmen, Sam," he slurred with studied

insolence; "but you're not in their class. You're welshing on me because I'm helpless. Take it from me, Sam," he went on, "no self-respecting porch-climber, or stick-up man should associate with you; *they're* too honest!"

So saying, he fastened the one-button coat, tilted the sailor hat, and strode out.

Making his way to the tiny apartment with the kitchenette, he prepared a cup of steaming coffee, which he drank with some cookies for a repast. He then packed his belongings and betook himself to the railroad station.

"Not so bad, at that!" he exulted to himself as he changed one of Sam's bills at the ticket office. "Three hundred to the good, and that was a bum burg."

"But that cashier made thirty dollars on my only bond," he complained to himself, "and that one wasn't phoney! I bought it for a *good* one!"

The train was pulling out, and the rat-faced man hung his sailor hat high above the cushioned seat, donned a woolen traveling cap, which he tightened at a rakish angle on his head, and struck a match on his shoe.

"So long, Conservative Sam!" he mused with a quizzical smile, as he puffed at another fat cigar. "If that cashier falls for those phoney bonds—but I don't think he will—there'll be something doing when he presents the semi-annual interest coupons. And to-morrow's the first of July!"

Collier says that men inherit their religion from their mothers, and their politics from their fathers. We know many sons of very religious mothers who seem to have inherited their religion from billy goats.—*Houston Post.*

And, who picked up their politics from communing with the first cousin of a burro.—*Minneapolis Tribune.*

THE MAN FROM HOME

By K. EDWARD HARRISON

THE telephone rang noisily. "Shanghai" Brown laid aside the glass he had been polishing and ponderously approached the instrument.

"Well?"

"Golden Gate; eight o'clock; Spike—big haul."

"Good!"

Shanghai hung up the receiver, gazed abstractedly for several moments at the opposite wall, then walked behind the bar and slowly bent beneath its large mahogany surface. A few stifled grunts and he emerged again to view, puffing and blowing, bearing in his hand the object of his quest—a gaudy placard.

Pausing to laboriously remove the beads of perspiration from his shining forehead and blue-veined jowls, he waddled to the show window, pushed aside the green curtain forming a background to the array of whiskey bottles, and carefully placed the card in the centre of the exhibit; a most innocent action, apparently having but one significance—that Bender's dark ale was on draught within.

The buxom young lady displayed on the placard, had smiled invitingly to all passers-by for over an hour before encountering the careless, bulldog glance of a tall athletic young man who, after a second reassuring glance, immediately changed an aimless gait to a brisk walk.

Turning swiftly into an adjoining alley, he circled the block and paused before a small door in the rear of the saloon, took a hasty survey of the deserted street and quickly entered.

"Lock that door."

He shot the rusty bolt and turned in the direction of the gruff voice, dimly discerning the corpulent figure of Brown seated by a table in an obscure corner.

"What's on, Shang?"

Shanghai's small pig-like eyes glistened under their thick lids.

"A big night's work for you, Spike, my boy. Bascomb has a husky in tow and you will meet them at the Golden Gate at eight o'clock. He is a stranger and packs a horse choking roll. Give him the dope or sack, but get him—quietly. Riggs will be waiting at coal dock number six. Ship him for a quiet cruise on Fritz Brunner's whaler, the Morning Star."

Mr. William Ryan, better known to the denizens of the San Francisco water front as Spike, looked closely into the face of his chief.

"How much do I get?" he said tersely.

"Fifty and a fourth of the roll—there are only four of us," said Brown.

Ryan rose abruptly, his six feet of bone and muscle towering in strange contrast to the squat heavy figure before him.

"You're on!" he said briefly.

The bell in the distant tower of St. Mary's was faintly completing its eighth reverberating stroke as Spike Ryan, resplendent in a checked suit and flashing tie, strode through the swinging portals of the Golden Gate Café, and easily shouldered his way through the swarms of lesser humanity, until he reached the desired point of vantage—the cigar counter.

Carefully selecting a cigar of the quality superior to those he usually en-

joyed, he leisurely surveyed his surroundings, quickly noting the fiery shock-head of the heavy-set Bascomb seated with a companion near the main entrance.

Lighting his cigar with great deliberation, he paused a few moments before the baseball score board and then slowly passed toward the entrance; turning in well-simulated surprise as a voice at his elbow exclaimed:

"It's Bill Ryan or his ghost!"

"Why—hello, Bascomb! I haven't seen you for a year."

The two clasped hands in a manner that brought a sympathetic smile to the bronzed face of the tall young man standing awkwardly with both hands resting on the back of his chair.

"Beg pardon," continued Bascomb glibly, "I wish to present my friend Mr. Ryan—Mr. Mason.

"You see," said Bascomb as they drew their chairs to a small table, "I was just telling Mason that the West was a good place to stick around if he has a roll big enough to hold him over for a month or two, and here you come—a living example of the East prospering over us poor Westerners!"

"Are you from the East?" ventured Mason, turning to his new acquaintance.

"He sure is," broke in the loquacious Bascomb, "from New York, and if he won't say so himself, he will soon be going back to the home folks in his own private car," and Bascomb laughed noisily.

"What part of the East do you hail from?" interrupted Spike, hastily diverting the conversation from himself.

Mason colored.

"I'm afraid you have not heard of the place. I'm from Wescott, Maryland—they haven't even trolley cars there—but after four years in Alaska, it surely looks good to me. I believe I saw about a dozen white faces a year up there," he ended.

"Wescott," muttered Ryan strangely, "you're from Wescott?"

"Why, yes," said Mason, eagerly noting the change of expression in the other's face, "ever been there?"

Bascomb shot a wondering look at his usually taciturn companion.

"No," answered Ryan vaguely. "I once knew a fellow from there a long time ago by the name of Thompson—I forgot his first name—and it just came to my mind when you spoke."

"Thompson," echoed Mason, "that's funny; why I know the family well—that is, all except Bert. He left home when I was a kid and they've never heard from him since. I wish you could tell me something about him."

Spike shook his head.

"We never ask questions of men out here and all he mentioned about himself was Wescott, and for some reason the name stuck in my memory."

Mason hesitated.

"You see," he continued shyly, "that's why I am so anxious to get home. Dorothy—that is, Bert's sister, and I, are going to be married when I arrive. Think of it! Going home after four long years of hell in a frozen country—no one to talk to; little to eat and never knowing which day would be the last, until finally I struck it rich—and I never could have done it if the thought of that little girl waiting at home had not kept me up."

The young man suddenly became aware of his unconscious outburst and paused.

"Excuse this drivel, gentlemen, but I feel like a kid out of school. Do you blame me?" With a quick movement he produced a tiny locket and snapped the catch.

"That's Dorothy."

"She's a peach, all right," complimented Bascomb, oblivious to the trembling of the hand that Ryan extended for the trinket.

"You are a lucky man," remarked Spike, catching the warning glance of Bascom. Precious time was passing and

Riggs with the yawl was even at this moment waiting impatiently amid the shadows of the coal wharf.

"You understand," apologetically explained Mason in declining Bascomb's third pressing offer of a drink, "that's why I've cut out the tanglefoot and am off on the ten-forty, in spite of the hospitality of you all."

"We know how you feel, son," said Bascomb genially as they rose, "and," he continued, consulting an ornately engraved watch, "we will see you off, if you have no objections."

Mason, a friendly warmth permeating his being, followed his hospitable hosts through the swinging doors.

What the plan of action would be in quietly disposing of the credulous stripling, was understood only too well by Shanghai's emissaries, as the trio, arm-in-arm, swung from the main thoroughfare into a narrow by-way that Bascomb easily termed a "short-cut."

The street became darker as they progressed; the conversation of the talkative Bascomb never lagging as imperceptibly he dropped slightly to the rear —inch by inch, his right hand now resting easily on the venomous blackjack reposing in the pocket of his coat.

The dimly lighted street crossing loomed weirdly ahead; there only two could pass abreast. Ryan unconsciously tightened his hold on the victim's arm as Bascomb abruptly fell behind.

"Run for that light ahead—station—six blocks to right," grated Spike, shouldering the astonished Mason from the walk, catching as he whirled on his heel, the leaden smash of the hissing blackjack full upon his upraised arm.

Surprise, utter bewilderment, changing to savage hate, flashed over the lineaments of Bascom's working face as Ryan, with the agility of a tiger, flung himself fiercely upon his partner, crushing the burly figure to the earth, his lithe fingers working their way into the thick neck—choking relentlessly.

Standing numbly apart, feeling more than seeing, the forms of his late companions silently writhing and straining in the darkness, Mason stared dazedly.

"Run—you fool," said Ryan through clenched teeth, ever tightening the iron grip on his adversary's throat.

The young man lingered—fascinated.

"For — for — Dorothy's sake — run!" gasped Spike.

And Mason ran, his footsteps echoing and re-echoing down the empty street—growing fainter and fainter, until lost in the darkness.

Ryan held the tense form beneath him until he saw a shadowy figure pass rapidly beneath the distant light—to safety, and then rose unsteadily.

"You — you — damned — welcher," snarled Bascomb heavily, his bloodshot eyes expressing unutterable contempt and passion. "He's gone!"

"Yes," mused Ryan, gazing pensively at the distant light and apparently oblivious of the other's presence, "he's gone—home—to little Dot."

Bascomb drunkenly staggered to his feet. "Why did you doublecross me? You—you—" The hoarse query ended in a gutteral rattle.

Spike drew his handkerchief and carefully wiped the blood from his checked sleeve.

"I'm—Thompson," he said quietly.

We have received from Brentano's "The Wisdom of Woodrow Wilson." It is a small book which can be carried in a vest pocket.—*Heywood Broun*, in the *New York Tribune*.

RUN AMUCK

By MAUDE NEWBEGIN

CRUCIBLE was awake, or rather that part which had slept was awake; the town as a whole, never slept. Men straggled along their various ways toward the ovens and the mines—a polyglot mass of men: squat, muscular Hungarians, heavy-faced Russians and lithe, quick-eyed Italians. The rising flames from the two long lines of coke ovens burned palely in the bright morning light. Loaded cars of coal started up the tipples, and the empty cars going down were swallowed up in the mines' yawning, black mouths.

At the doors of the company houses, which stood in monotonous rows like the stilted arrangement of a toy village, women appeared—barefooted women with babies on their arms; and barefooted children swarmed out into the road.

A squarely-built young Hungarian with a dinner-pail on his arm, shambled out of one of the houses and started off down the brick road that began to blaze hot under the summer sun. He had gone but a few paces when a bright-clad little figure dashed out of the next house and danced tantalizingly before him.

"Look, John, look!" she cried, raising her short skirts a trifle higher and pointing happily to her white-stockinged ankles, and her feet encased in heavy, black strapped slippers. "I go barefoot no more—I'm woman now. Soon, my hair." She grasped the thick yellow braid which hung down her strong young back and twisted it around her head to illustrate that she would soon wear it up. "See!"

She made a pretty, vainglorious picture, the little Slav girl, as she strutted along beside him and the man gaped at her, lost in admiring wonder.

"It is the little Sophy a woman grown," he declared in Hungarian.

But she shook her yellow head disapprovingly. "I no understand. Spik English!" she commanded willfully.

"How old you, Sophy?"

"Seventeen!" proudly.

"You go with me to-night, Sophy, car ride?"

"Yes," she consented eagerly.

Just at that moment they came to where recent heavy rains had caused a washout by the side of the road. Sophy in her excitement and the slippery awkwardness of her new shoes, caught her foot and lurched forward. The man quickly flung out his hand to save her. She reached for the hand but missed and slipped down into the black dust of the washout.

He stooped and lifted her up, setting her stumbling feet once more on the safety of the bricks. She looked a bit rueful as she tried to brush off the dirt which sullied the glory of her new finery, then—her gayety restored—she turned from him with a smiling, "Good-bye, John."

"Good-bye, Sophy."

His dog-brown eyes followed her as she danced away toward an interested neighbor who wanted to see the new slippers and stockings.

He made his way to the ovens, where, stripped to trousers and shirt, he drew out the white-hot coke. And as he

worked, inured to the scorching heat, he saw ever a gaily dressed little figure with a thick yellow braid, proudly displaying her first permanent pair of shoes.

The smoke from the ovens curled lazily upward in the warm summer sky, and tips of orange flame illumined the darkness as the ecstatic young Hungarian and the laughing, chattering girl, started off that evening on the promised outing. On the steps of the company houses groups of friends and neighbors nodded and smiled significantly as they passed. "Sophy is a woman," they said; "it is right that she should marry. John is steady and good. She is a lucky girl."

But to blithesome Sophy, John's enduring qualities were matters of little moment. He was not so handsome as he might have been, but he admired her. That was enough for the happiness of the present.

She enjoyed the car ride, and sat looking out into the soft darkness, the night wind blowing in her face. John's arm over the back of the seat, close to her shoulders, gave her a pleasurable sensation.

As he bade her good-night, she wished that he would kiss her, but he only looked at her with reverent shyness. She seemed very wonderful to him; he would not have dared to kiss her.

That car ride was the first of many. Sophy twisted up her braid and lengthened her skirts; and John, with fast-beating heart, turned into the house next door almost every night and took her off every Sunday.

The first time they rode out to a pleasure park, the smooth floor and rollicking music of the dance hall called alluringly to the girl. She beat her slippered foot impatiently, but John had to confess that he could not dance. When she showed her disgust unmistakably and coaxed him to try, he bravely made the attempt, but his heaviness of foot quickly brought them to grief. Sophy flounced off the floor, while he meekly followed.

The weeks went by with many excursions to mark their passing, but he never attempted to kiss her. Other young foreigners, or "hunkies" in the vernacular of the coal country, were observing Sophy, and she was beginning to hold John somewhat in contempt. But he had not failed to notice the admiring glances of his fellow workers. When he strolled with her past the company store, she preened and coquetted, and he was bitten by a burning jealousy.

So out of his fear of losing her sprang courage at last. "I—I lov' you—Sophy," he stammered one night.

She laughed, a maddening little laugh, and bent her yellow head close to his. "I—I know, John," she mocked.

At that he took her in his arms and kissed her; and she lay there throbbing in blissful young response to passion.

"You—you marry me, Sophy?" he dared to whisper.

"Maybe—some day."

"Soon, Sophy," he urged.

"Where we live?" she parried.

"I have money in bank; I get company house."

"We take boarder?" she questioned.

"No boarder—'less you say, Sophy," he agreed readily.

"I don' know; maybe I like boarder."

"You marry me soon, Sophy?"

"Maybe—some day," was the nearest to a promise that he could get; but she allowed him many kisses at parting.

The next morning his pail was not ready. "The baby, seeck," explained his voluble landlady with many protestations of regret. "I send Sophy—yes?" And he hurried off, delight in his heart that she would bring his dinner.

Arrived at the ovens, he found a new foreman, a lithe, low-browed Italian. John was a man of slow dislikes, but he felt an instant distrust of the newcomer. The day was hot and oppressive; the sky lowering; the smoke hanging low. Sweat poured off the men's reeking bodies as they fed the hungry red

maws of the huge ovens. The Italian was bullying, cursing the laggards, urging them on to greater effort. At the sound of the noon whistle, spent with weariness and the heat, they dropped down and opened their dinner pails.

Along the road came Sophy, a gay little person, clean and cool. John went to meet her, his whole body atremble at the memory of the night before, when he had held her in his arms and had dared to kiss her. She calmly handed him the pail; no trace of embarrassment in her provocatively-smiling face.

"It good to see you, Sophy," he mumbled. "You no forget; you marry me, some day."

"Maybe—"

A shadow loomed back of them. "Your seester, John?"

They both turned to meet the bold black eyes of the new foreman. His teeth showed in an ingratiating smile.

"No sister," the girl denied. "I Sophy Shadek." She met the bold eyes saucily.

"Lucky dog, you, John," laughed the Italian, but he gave the girl a meaning glance as he slouched away.

"He handsome man," said Sophy.

"He bad man, I know," asserted John, making his first mistake in the fire of his pain.

"How you know?" she retorted hotly. "Go eat dinner—I go home."

"Sophy!"

"No! You crazy jealous. I no marry you."

As through a mist he saw her toss her head and trip away. He heard the foreman call her name softly yet boldly. He saw her stop and simper as she brought forth all her little tricks of coquetry.

And that night he did not turn into the house next door for the Italian went in before he could muster courage to brave her flippant anger. The two came out and passed down the road, while John huddled miserably out of sight in the darkness, listening to her merry little laugh as it floated back to him. On the steps of the company houses groups of friends and neighbors conjectured and shook their heads in disapproval as Sophy and her new admirer passed. The fire from the ovens flared fitfully and the low-hanging smoke soon hid them.

John tried to make his peace at his earliest opportunity, but the girl flouted him shamefully. "I no go with you, now," she shrilled. "I go with Tony. He dance grand."

"He no good for you, Sophy," the man protested miserably, making his second mistake.

"You jealous," she jibed. "I no listen."

The days and nights became one ceaseless torture to John—days under the petty tyrannies and insults of the sneering foreman; nights when he sat by and watched the two saunter off together: Sophy cheaply daring, the Italian crowding close to her in easy familiarity.

But by the end of summer, Crucible knew him no more. There were other ovens, and work to be had. He fled to escape what he had come to feel he could not endure.

Fall and winter went their round, and spring blossomed bravely as best it could in the coal fields, choked with smoke and grime.

"He's some worker, that hunky!" one of the company men remarked to another, as they stood watching him one day.

John heard the words, but they roused no feeling of pride. Work until he was forced to sleep from sheer exhaustion was all he asked of life, for when there was no work and no sleep, there was ever the picture of Sophy as he had dreamed—Sophy busy in one of the cozy little company houses; but it was not he who came in at the door, who caught her up and held her.

As the two men passed on, the other started to speak. The Hungarian straightened his bent, toiling body, dashed

the sweat from his eyes with his blackened hand and gazed after the supple, catlike figure he knew so well.

That night he sought him out. Something had flashed into his dull mind at first sight of the Italian—some presentiment of evil. His every thought, like the stars in their courses around a planet, revolved around Sophy. What was the meaning of the man seeking work outside of Crucible?

When he found him, he blurted out: "What you do here?"

"Ah, eet ees John," greeted the other jovially.

"What you do her?" persisted the Hungarian doggedly.

Fire flashed into the bold black eyes, but there was a certain uneasiness back of it. "What that to you?" the Italian demanded. "I work!"

"An' Sophy! She with you?"

"Sophy!" The sneer in the hateful voice was unmistakable.

"Yes, Sophy!" The hunky took a step forward.

The other backed at the quiet menace in the dog-brown eyes. "Ah—Sophy, you say?" He threw out his hands deprecatingly. "She would not come."

"Perhaps—you lie. I know soon!" was the only answer, as the Hungarian turned on his heel and walked away.

The following day was Sunday. With a decision of action that was new-born, John took the first train for Crucible. His old friends greeted him as he made his way along the familiar road. His voluble landlady welcomed him even more volubly. But he found that he could not ask one of them of Sophy, and because they evidently avoided any mention of her name, he understood that his half-formed fears were built on facts.

When finally he came face to face with the girl, the sodden shame and misery of her struck him like a physical blow. He clutched the cement wall for support. Her pretty, coquettish little face was drained of color, drained of brightness, drained of youth itself. The thick yellow braid coiled around her head seemed dank and lusterless.

Speechless he gazed at her, a burning ache in his heart for her suffering. He noticed too, that as further badge of her shame and dependence, she was barefoot—she who had scorned to go barefoot once she possessed shoes. The first day when she had blossomed forth so vividly as a woman came poignantly before him. As if she read something of what was passing in his mind, she raised her hands to cover her poor face and whimpered like a beatin cur. For life had beaten her—gay, shallow, heedless Sophy.

The man drew a long, sighing breath, and drawing nearer, he placed his hand awkwardly on the downbent head. "Sophy—" he choked.

She shrank back almost as if he had struck her.

"He mus' marry you, soon," John said.

"What?"

"I say—he mus' marry you."

"He no do that—he laugh," she stammered.

"I make him marry you."

Suddenly her head was on his shoulder and she had given way to a passion of weeping. He held her silently, realizing, somehow, that the outburst would bring relief.

"I want die, John, I no can live," she sobbed.

He comforted her as best he could saying, over and over, "Don' you worry, Sophy, I make him marry you."

When he left her, a little of the old sparkle gleamed momentarily in her eyes as she smiled up at him through her tears. As he turned away, he heard her name called shrilly. With drooping shoulders and lagging step, she entered the house.

A short time later, he went to the kindly woman whose boarder he had been for so many months. In his hand was

a well-thumbed bank-book. He opened the book and below the last entry he pointed to a sentence he had penned with much labor. "When I die this all go free to Sophy Shadek," she read slowly.

"Yes," he nodded, "that right. Now my name." He wrote carefully. "So."

Her husband had slouched in and stood peering over John's shoulder. When the signature was finished, John handed them the pen in turn. "You write—so," he directed.

And when both had signed, he handed the book to the woman with the simple remark: "You keep for her—maybe she need it, some day."

They shook their heads pityingly as he left them. "She not good enough for him," the woman muttered, with the merciless judgment of her sex. Her husband nodded agreement.

Crucible never saw John again.

That night he found the Italian, who had been made foreman of a night shift. He strode up to the man and spoke with slow directness: "You mus' marry Sophy."

The other turned on him with a snarl and a foul oath. "Marry Sophy," he roared, "never!"

The hunky's short muscular hands clenched at his sides. "You marry Sophy—or I kill you!" The tones of his voice never lifted.

"Kill me-e!" The Italian smote his chest. "That good! Ha-ha!"

In the light of the ovens their figures stood out boldy—the one, thick and powerfull; the other, slim, almost feline. The workmen drew near—watching, listening—thirsting for a fight.

"Again, I say—you marry her!"

"No!" was the derisive retort, followed by another oath.

"Then I *kill* you!" spat out the Hungarian.

He sprang forward and grasped the other man, but Tony was quick—a knife flashed in his hand. There was a warning shout from the onlookers. John caught the Italian's wrist as the gleaming blade swept down and grazed his shoulder. Blood spread in a crimson stain over his shirt. Tony cursed with pain as he felt the iron grip on his wrist, and the knife clattered to the ground. He broke from the other man's hold.

Back and forth the two raged in what the gaping hunkies, who watched them avidly, sensed would be a death struggle. What advantage John had in size and strength, the other made up in agility. The Hungarian aimed sledgehammer blows toward his opponent, but very few reached their mark as, with snake-like quickness, the Italian slid from under the huge hand.

But after a time it could be seen that Tony's endurance was wearing; he breathed heavily. He dodged a smashing blow from the right fist, only to be caught unaware, squarely in the face, with the left. The two men locked. As they writhed and twisted in the red flare of the ovens, tearing up the cinders under their heavy boots, the sweat pouring from their bodies and running in rivulets down their soot-grimed faces, they might have stood as models for a Rodin group; they might have been called forth from another Inferno.

The Italian was growing weaker; mortal terror burned livid in his black ayes. John's right arm swiftly upflung, caught him across the chest, gripping his right shoulder, forcing up his chin. Tony clawed madly, but the powerful left arm encircled his back, pinioning his hands. The Hungarian forced him over backward, slowly, inexorably.

There was a sickening crack of breaking bone. He ceased to struggle. The limp form of the Italian slipped from the crushing hold to the ground.

The watching men rushed to him and lifted him, but he fell from their hands, a battered, spineless, lifeless thing.

"He's dead!" The whisper flew from mouth to mouth. They gazed awestricken at the panting, sweating victor, stand-

ing over that which he had robbed of life. He made no attempt to escape.

There was a shout from the direction of the mine. Several men were running toward the tragic group. One, a little in advance of the others, who appeared to have some authority, reached the Hungarian first. He laid a heavy hand on the spent man's shoulder.

"You'll swing for this!" he thundered.

Suddenly John seemed galvanized into life. He broke from the man's hold and dashed away, a mob instantly at his heels. He ran the length of the line of blazing ovens, then turned and scrambled up a heap of cinder waste. His pursuers stopped a moment in surprise. He jumped from the mound of waste to the first one of the line of ovens. He stood for an instant poised on the brink of the seething, man-made volcano, from which belched hissing flame and sulphurous smoke.

The men beneath him gazed upward, spellbound, as he balanced there, a half-naked, blood-stained figure of primitive vengance, silhouetted against the murky sky in which appeared the first faint streaks of dawn. Then, with a weird, guttural cry, he flung up his arms and leaped into the flaming, white-hot heap of coke below.

And the company's books recorded: "A hunky run amuck."

The minute we thank the Lord for one kind of weather we fall from grace swearing at another.—*Atlanta Constitution.*

One fine way of self-denial is to forego the cold bath during Lent.—*Buffalo Evening News.*

Sir Oliver Lodge has a noticeable material side, too. For instance, he collects $1,500 for a lecture.—*Bridgeport Telegram.*

"Treaty Is Back on the Floor"—*Headline.* Or on its back on the floor?—*Arkansas Gazette.*

Washington had severe headaches. Wilson has Senator Lodge.—*H. I. Phillips in the New York Globe.*

"Chris" Morley says that at any rate there will be no protest against deporting some of the red-blooded fiction.—*Baltimore Sun.*

Did you think that you would live to see the Irish potato become an aristocrat among fruits?—*Minneapolis Tribune.*

Love is something that makes you hold a girl's hand for four hours and forget that you are sitting on your hat.—*Luke McLuke.*

GETTING LEFTY

By WARD TRAIL

HE tramp steamer, Adrienne, was two days out of Bremen before Mason was sure his quarry was not aboard. It was too much. Twenty weeks before he had been told tersely enough to "Get Lefty," and had been given Lefty's description.

Mason was a detective on the New York force and he had not considered it altogether complimentary when he was sent out to pick up a diamand thief, short and stocky, with red hair, a fleck of brown in one blue eye and a purple crescent scar above the other, a deep dimple in the left cheek and plenteous freckles on both, besides being left handed. Usually he was put on cases where there was little to work upon, and he had always brought in his man. Mason had not understood—then.

And now for twenty weeks he had been following this colored Sunday supplement across and up and down the continent of Europe, always close behind him, but always behind. He had been within an hour of his man two days before, when he had boarded the Adrienne. There had been almost a blazed trail to the tramp, and now, two days out, he was convinced that the man had once more eluded him. The steamer was without wireless apparatus and the first port touched would be Waco, South Africa, where freight for the diamond mines would be left. He had practically shanghaied himself, and Lefty would have just seven weeks start.

Diamond mines? Lefty never by any chance appropriated anything but diamonds. He had time and time again left other precious stones and gold untouched. And the trail to the steamer for South Africa had been very plain indeed.

The slow days passed and the boat glided over the oily waters of the tropics, crossed the line and plowed her way into the blue wastes beyond with never a stop to break the dull tedium. But Mason no longer desired to stop off. He had conceived an idea so far from the probabilities that he thought it might be quite possible.

At last the days of pacing the cramped decks came to an end and the Adrienne nosed into Waco. Mason began his careful inquiries at once, and to his vast delight, as much as to his amazement, found that his error lay simply in taking the wrong boat and not in chasing his man to that particular dock. He was told that a short stout man with red hair and freckles, a funny cock in one eye, and a curved, purple scar over the other, had come in a week ago on a faster tramp and had gone on immediately to the largest mine in the diamond fields. Quietly, therefore, Mason slipped into the dirty passenger compartment of the little jerk water line and followed. At the mine, his credentials gave him the privilege of nosing around to his heart's content. He made no more inquiries. He wanted to take this glaring white elephant without further assistance.

Having looked over the outside works, he made his way into the mine with the men. Man after man passed but not one was his man. It was possible that Lefty was with the other shift, so Mason decided to bide his time. He would

debark from Waco with Lefty in his custody, or wire his resignation to his chief from Waco. And he would turn the trick by himself, too.

No, he would not go back now to where he had watched the men placing the fuse for a blast. To-night, when he looked over the other shift, perhaps—

There was a smothered detonation.

"Quicksand! Quicksand! The shelf! The shelf!"

The gutteral cry was quite meaningless to Mason's ears as he made his way thoughtfully to the mouth of the mine. Hurried footsteps sounded behind him and men raced past him, wild eyes glaring in their blackened faces. Then the cry came again.

"Quicksand! Quicksand! The shelf!"

Two burly men grasped Mason's arms and raced him with them to the last break. One of them lifted him bodily and threw him up on the wide ledge there, on which the others had already scrambled.

"Help me!" cried the man who had waited to lift the visitor.

Four men reached out eager arms and with a mighty heave brought him up with them. And then Mason saw and understood. Quicksand, released by the last blast, was flooding the mine! It had overtaken the man and though he had been pulled up in time, his boots were left sticking in the innocent-looking, wet sand, now showing in the dim light on the floor below the ledge where they crouched. Even as he looked, the boots were lost to view, though the sand hardly seemed to move.

"What's to be done?" he asked.

The man next him shrugged his shoulders.

"Wait," was the laconic reply.

The deadly sand crept up, and up and up. It passed a crack that Mason had been watching.

"Wait for what?" he suddenly shouted, shuddering in a new and deadly fear.

"For planks, if they know about it in time," vouchsafed another of the men in a stolidly indifferent tone.

Mason watched the slowly rising sand with fascinated terror. Now it passed the next jagged crack. A gray, sleek something touched his hand and vanished into the gloom. The slight, scratching sounds he had been hearing ever since the noise of the blast had subsided were explained. The rats, of course. The still sand made no sound. It only rose and rose. It was up to the place where the ledge rounded out now.

Suddenly Mason gave a mighty yell. Then, having found his voice, continued to use it without consciousness of what he said, or seeming volition on his part. The men looked at him pityingly. One of them reached over and patted his shoulder.

"Do something! Do something!" he yelled at them.

"We're waiting. They most always know in time and send in planks," one of them assured him.

And then it happened. Quietly a broad plank nosed its way into the dim opening by the ledge. Then up to the end of that plank came the end of another like it and a man's cheerful voice sang out into the deadly gloom. "All aboard for the outside of this, my hearties!"

Something in the timbre of that voice roused Mason from the limp relief into which the appearance of the plank had cast him. It was quite unlike the voices of the men around him. It was really very like a New York Irish voice. He peered keenly at the man. And it was true! He had red hair and freckles, a dark scar above one eye and a deep dimple in one cheek. In the darkness, it was impossible to see the fleck of brown in one eye, but Mason was willing to take that for granted, since the man was short and stocky and used his left hand with more dexterity than his right in guiding the broad planks over the treacherous sand. It was Lefty.

An then Lefty looked at Mason, and Mason suddenly knew something he had merely suspected before. Lefty knew him and his mission! And now Lefty held his life, as well as the lives of the seven stolid fellows beside him, in the hollow of his hand!

"It's on the outside you'd rather be seeing me now, is it not so, Mr. Mason?" he asked in a mocking voice, and as he made a mocking bow to the great detective whom he had led all over the continent, his left hand made a sudden awkward movement and the plank tipped on edge. Slowly, though the stocky man clutched it with all his might, it slipped, slipped down, slowly down, down. It was gone!

One of the men swore softly in his mother tongue. Lefty backed carefully off the plank on which he was lying to the one behind it, and slowly and with infinite care, pushed the front one up to the ledge. Mason understood. Sign language makes plain reading to a detective. And with that understanding, his courage came back with a rush. He was again the calm, cool Mason, holding his life as nothing, his profession as everything—the Mason that had started on this quest.

When the plank was close enough, the men, with stolid and unanimous politeness, motioned the detective forward. This also, Mason understood. In a way, he was their guest; they would give him their best. But he could not have it so. This was his fight. Lefty did not mean to be taken and he could easily tip a plank in the darker passage through which they must creep like snakes, feeling their way, lost if a plank were lost.

"Seven men are to come ahead of me—seven—count them," he said, quietly, as Lefty slipped away. There was no reply.

"I do not know how to go. You must go first that I may learn," he said to the men.

"But she is creeping up," they reminded him.

"Plenty of time, if you will go quickly and show me the way," he managed to say, though he felt his terror returning.

It was true, as the man had said. "She" was creeping up. "She" had not paused with the advent of help. Already the lower half of the bulge at the very edge of the ledge was covered with the simple-looking, wet sand, that did not seem to be moving, yet moved.

With consummate carefulness, one of the men crept out on the plank. Not until he gave a shout, indicating that he had reached the third plank, did the second man start. The sand had crept an inch nearer before his shout started the third man. How slow that third man seemed! The sand had risen another inch. before the fourth man received his signal. A shout, and the fifth man crept serpentwise on to the plank, that seemingly immovable, moved and rose, and moved and rose, with the sand on which it lay. Another inch of precious space was lost before the shout that tolled off the sixth man.

Then the seventh man tried to make Mason take his chance.

"No. You must go. This is new to me and I've lost my nerve. If your life depended on my not tipping a plank, I'd be dead sure to tip one; and if I did that, my man, I'd just slip off, and we'd both be lost, and so uselessly. No. You go and if I know I'm last, you see I won't have to bother about the plank I creep off, and that'll make it a lot easier for me."

The man protested a little, but when the shout came, he went, like the very sensible fellow that he was. And Mason was left there alone.

Slowly, slowly, the sand crept up and up. An inch was lost—an inch and a half—was the sand rising faster now or was the seventh man going more slowly? Mason could not tell. After an eternity, the shout came. The sand was rising faster! After the shout and before he could creep on to the plank another inch was lost. It was, indeed, rising very

much faster. There was a scant two inches of the ledge left when he finally got himself properly spread upon the first plank and began the sinuous glide to the next. Which one would be displaced? Would Lefty start back to meet him after the seventh man emerged, and manage in that dim passage to tip one plank? He reached the third plank and something told him to shout as if there were still a man to follow. He shouted. The seventh man heard and called back encouragingly to him. He did not catch what the fellow said. It did not matter.

Where would the missing plank be? It was hard work, this crawling, and if he were not to get out, he hoped he would slip very soon into the smothering monster that was lifting him and his plank higher and higher and higher all the time, though now there was nothing by which he could mark its progress. He crept on to the sixth plank. How many there were he had no idea. He was very tired, but he would wriggle on. Maybe somebody would prevent Lefty from tipping a plank. But who was there to know that Lefty would have any object in his death? Fool that he had been, not to tell the manager what he was there for. He would take his man alone! That old spurt of pride seemed very puerile to Mason now. Twelve planks—thirteen—fourteen. He was counting automatically. It did not matter how many there were. He had had no idea that it would be so far or take such centuries. Was life, after all, worth it? If he got out alive, Lefty would be gone. He most certainly would never sit down out there and wait for a detective to come out and take him. But, at least, if he did not get him, he would have spiked his guns for any design he might have on diamonds in the rough. There was little satisfaction in that. Sixteen — seventeen—eighteen—it was growing lighter. Was it? Or was he losing his head? Nineteen—twenty— No, it was really lighter. He was almost out. Voices came faintly to him Would it be the next plank that was missing? No. His hand clutched it and he drew himself on. Twenty-one—twenty-two— It was very light now, and the voices were nearer, but he did not care. They had no meaning for him. He was too busy feeling for the end of the plank—that end which would not be kissing the other. Twenty-three — twenty-four — something lifted him. He was no longer creeping forward with tired, swollen hands and knees that were numbed. It was quite all right, of course. He had rather expected to go down when he came to the place of the missing plank, but it seemed he was to go up instead. That did not matter, either. He was floating easily, and ease was what he wanted.

He floated in a downy, soft darkness for ages and ages, then a gutteral voice commanded, "Here, trink dis," and something that burned was forced down his throat. He sat up. The smudged miners were swimming rather foolishly, he thought, about him. Dizzily he saw that it was a kindly Dutch doctor who held the cup to his lips.

"Where did my man go?" he asked.

"Vot man iss dot?" the doctor queried.

"A short, stocky, red-headed man, with a fleck of brown in one blue eye and a purple, crescent scar above the other, a deep dimple in one cheek and freckles on both—a left-handed man," parroted Mason, glibly.

"So? Dot's dot man, for the life, dot de manager vants just now. It iss dot he iss stole all de rough diamonts vot vos packed ready for der shibment, ninety tousant tollars vort diamonts, unt mate off mit dem on dot dramp steamer dot sailed vile ve vos vatching at der mund for der men to ged oud of dot floot. Dot dramp she carries no vireless, too, unt schtops most eferyvere from now oud."

THE CIRCLE

By HARVEY FERGUSSON

ROM the crest of the slope where Guadelupe lay in wait, the German peddler and his burro coming across the desert looked like a large insect and a small one creeping slowly over a sunlit floor. There was no other living thing in sight except the wheeling buzzards above them.

Guadelupe flattened himself behind the scant cover of a small Spanish bayonet plant and cocked the hammer of his Winchester. His swarthy cheek nestled against the stock; he drew a careful aim, and the copper bead of the rifle sight covered the breast of the unsuspecting peddler. Guadelupe knew that he could kill his man with certainty at two-hundred yards, but he resolved to wait until the peddler had crossed the dry, shallow arroyo at the foot of the slope. There was neither trail nor road across that part of the desert; the peddler was taking a short cut. In the little gulch his body would be meat for the coyotes and buzzards, and no man would ever find it.

The peddler's pack contained a bracelet in the form of a heavy silver circle set with turquoise, which had fascinated the great black eyes of the Senorita Catalina Martinez in the town of Las Lunas, twelve miles to the south. Those same black eyes had thrilled Guadelupe with the desperate passion which belongs to Latin blood. He would dare anything to bring that passion nearer fulfillment. And he had no money with which to buy the bracelet.

The peddler and his burro disappeared for a moment in the arroyo. Guadelupe rose to his knees and crossed himself; then settled back into his ambush. First the head of the peddler and then half of his body came slowly in sight as he toiled up the bank. Again the copper bead covered the man's breast, and this time the rifle cracked.

The peddler clasped his arms across his chest, coughed, and fell forward. In his death struggle he rolled to the bottom of the dry waterway and brought up, sitting, against the bank. His head lolled forward; his eyes were wide and staring. So he died.

Guadelupe came to the top of the bank and peered over. He felt a shudder of terror as he saw the ghastly result of his shot. The broad, sunburned visage of the dead man had turned a pale yellow, while the blood made a dark pool between his knees. The burro was quietly cropping the dry grass a few yards away. With nervous, fumbling fingers, Guadelupe stripped the pack off the animal and found the bracelet. He took also a wooden crucifix and a gaudy red silk bandana handkerchief. These he thrust into his shirt front, kicked the rest of the pack into the arroyo, and turned toward the town.

The sun was going down behind far mountains in a glowing mass of cloud. All afternoon the soft cumulus, edged with a dark promise of storm, had been piling up on the crest of the range. Now it was lit with colored fire and loomed immense and terrible. As the sun went lower, the cloud mass rose and spread, arching across the sky; so that when dusk came the familiar outline of the mountains was hidden.

Before Guadelupe had gone a mile,

darkness had fallen, and he cursed the peddler for having been so slow. Straight overhead, a few stars twinkled, and one great golden star shone directly before him. Toward this, he laid his course and hurried onward. In the still heat of the desert night, his breath came hard, while he slipped in the sand and stumbled over low, ground-clinging cacti.

The guiding star disappeared suddenly, like the light of a snuffed candle. He looked up and the last star overhead was also gone from view. The clouds had completely covered the sky and the desert was a black emptiness without mark or limit.

A gaunt black form, with two outstretched arms, loomed before him, and a quiver of terror shot through his body. For a moment he stood staring, then drew nearer. The startling form proved to be that of a great tree cactus, a bulbous branching thing without leaves or fruit, and by its presence Guadelupe knew that he had lost his way. He had never seen the great cactus cross before and had no idea in what part of the desert it grew; but he was certain that it was not on the way to Las Lunas. For several minutes his bewilderment was complete, for he had felt sure of the direction. But he did not acknowledge to himself that he was lost. A moment of concentration, and he felt sure which way lead homeward. Then he started off again.

In a little while his breath was coming in gasps and he was trembling and drenched with sweat; but still he did not spare himself. Thirst had begun to torture his mouth and throat, and with it had come fear, for he knew that thirst in the desert soon became madness. Already there were dancing forms and colors before his eyes, and vague, disturbing images that peered at him from the darkness.

For hours, he rushed ahead, spending the last of his energy; sometimes running to escape the fearful shapes in the darkness, and still he failed to see the far, scattered lights of the town. His mind was becoming confused and all things seemed remote, but he clung desperately to the belief that he was holding a straight course homeward. His knees were shaking, and every time he slipped and fell, it was harder to rise. Finally he was staggering, tracing a zig-zag trail in the sand, and he knew that his next fall would be the last one. He prayed that his efforts had carried him near the town, that the boys driving out the goats in the morning would find him. Suddenly he plunged over a low bank; his head struck a rock and consciousness went out in a shower of splintering lights.

The sun burning his face brought him back to his senses. He lay flat upon his back. His broken head was throbbing with pain, his swollen tongue filled his mouth, and his whole body was inert with weakness. High above him, half a dozen buzzards wheeled in patient circles, waiting for the sun to finish its work.

Gradually his memory brought back the images and sensations of the night before: the mad rush across the desert, the choking thirst, and the dead man back there in the arroyo.

Striving to move his legs, he found himself almost helpless, and knew that he could scarcely creep. For some minutes he made no effort to raise his head, knowing that what met his eyes would be life or death. He prayed that he might see the green ribbon of the valley shot through with its silver thread of blessed water. The image was so vivid that he felt almost sure the reality was near. He fancied that he heard the faint tinkle of goat bells and the singing of a girl. The imaginary sound brought before his mind the face of Catalina with her deep eyes and eager mouth. By a mighty effort he raised himself upon an elbow.

His eyes met the glassy stare, the drawn yellow face of the dead peddler. He had traveled the inevitable circle of the lost.

MEOWS FROM THE MOVIES

By ALICE GLENISTER

Shirley Mason, newest Fox star, proves her worth in "Her Elephant Man." She's winsome and blithe and good for what ails you. Her supporting cast is excellent, and the story is unusual.

Miss Florence Reed spends all but her sleeping hours either at the studio or the theater. Her latest screen vehicle for United is "The Strange Case of Marie Dupont." She is also rehearsing a stage play by Channing Pollock.

Mollie King, that delightful and beautiful brown-eyed stage and screen star, is all of that in "Women Men Forget," although we are of the opinion that Mollie is not the type of girl that men do forget.

Marguerite Clark is "Easy to Get" in her latest Paramount release. She's hard to get, we'll say, for an interview.

And here is another forsaken woman —"The Woman God Sent," Zena Keefe's latest Selznick picture.

"A Fool and His Money" and "The Honor of His House" are Eugene O'Brien's latest Selznick pictures.

Winchell Smith first wrote "The Fortune Hunter" for the stage; it was played by Jack Barrymore. It is Earle Williams, the matinee idol of Vitagraph, who is featured in this picture and he does some splendid acting.

Marie Doro, of the big brown eyes and frail beauty, will be seen in a series of films with Godfrey Tearle as her lead. We will all welcome Marie again to the screen, as her work has great appeal.

Do not fail to see "The Land of Opportunity," a Ralph Ince production, with Mr. Ince as star, playing the part of Abraham Lincoln. It is as good as "The Copperhead," Lionel Barrymore's Lincoln picture.

"Way Down East" is being filmed by D. W. Griffith. The studio sets are very like our conception of the quaintness and old-fashioned people and ways that abound in the story. It requires a master hand to produce this picture and retain the atmosphere of the stage production.

Cissy Fitzgerald, making comedies for United, has had a squirrel sent her. All Cissy wants now is a park, a peanut-tree and a monkey, to help out the "nutty" part of the arrangement.

Pearl White in "The White Moll," her first Fox feature, has justified all expectations of her acting in feature productions. Pearl could appear in almost any old story and make it a good one, but Frank Packard's story is as good as Pearl.

Alice Brady and her husband, James Crane, will occupy a bungalow in Hollywood this summer and will appear in pictures together. Such is wedded bliss in "reel-life."

"Three in One," a noted advertising slogan, might be applied to Dorothy Dalton in her picture, "Black Is White," where she enacts the part of three persons — obedient wife, fragile girl and dashing Parisian beauty.

Not for a good while will you see Theda Bara vamping her vampest across the silver sheet, as she has transferred her attractions from the silent screen to the speaking stage. Well, I guess Theda covered about all the different types of vamps and concluded to call it enough.

You will be able to see J. Warren Kerrigan's "Magic Skin," very soon. Fritzi Brunette is his leading lady. Since it is one of Balzac's masterpieces, we are promised some rare story.

Also, you will have a chance to see George Beban, personally, as he will tour the country with his "One Man in a Million." He doesn't look half so much like a "wop" as his pictures would lead you to believe.

Priscilla Dean, having finished her "Beautiful Beggar," has got herself rumored to be married to Wheeler Oakman. We are feverishly awaiting confirmation of the report, having had designs on Wheeler ourselves.

There is some "good red blood" in Bill Hart's next picture, in which he and Thomas Santschi have a fight. Hart is a returned soldier and Tom is a saloonkeeper in this picture.

When we asked a Universal editor why they changed Tsuru Acki's next starring vehicle from "Sayonara" to "A Tokio Siren," he replied: "Because she is the only one who could ever pronounce it." We'll say so, too.

Mabel Normand will show us what a "Girl with a Jazz Heart" acts and looks like in her new Goldwyn picture. Try to follow Miss Normand around a studio and you'll know to the tune of your own heart failure.

Viola Dana said, "You can't shimmy on tea," when we asked her why she didn't use the shimmy in "The Willow Tree," instead of so many Japanese dances. Viola is right, it can't be done. How do we know? Well, we know, all right. It takes something with more kick to it than tea.

ZaZu Pitts, Brentwood star, believes that shoes have souls as well as soles. She has one pair of shoes of ancient and honorable lineage that she wears in all her pictures. She believes if they were mended they would lose their "soul." Just how she figures this out we are at a loss to know.

T. Hayes Hunter, directing "Earthbound" for Goldwyn, believes his men to be "Heavenbound" instead, as they are all around the six-foot mark. Alec B. Francis is six feet; Wyndham Standing and Mahlon Hamilton are both six feet, one inch, and Lawson Butt is six feet, two inches.

Bill Russell's best friend is not a man, nor a woman, nor a chicken, nor a dog, nor cat. Neither is it good looking, but is old and battered and blackened. Without it no pictures are made, and the world weeps with him. The w. k. Fox star has an old pipe for his best friend. After all, Bill is right.

Douglas MacLean and Doris May will soon be seen in two picture plays that sound like a paradox—"Some Honeymoon" and "Mr. and Mrs. Not Married." If these two continue as they started out, their success will be assured, for their comedies are sure-fire hits.

Juanita Hansen's serial for Pathe is "The Mad Falon." Supporting Miss Hansen are Warren Oland and William Bailey. These two latter are w.k. screen villians, and a picture with them in the cast cannot fail to hold interest. They are the best bad-men in pictures.

Ruth Roland is working on her new serial, "Broadway Bab." Her leading man is Herbert Hayes, who also supported her in "Adventures of Ruth."

He was a great judge—of peaches. He didn't have the heart to send her to jail; but, you know Sennett Comedies—flood, fire, earthquakes and laughter. Go and see "Ten Dollars or Ten Days." With Charlie Murray and Ford Sterling, what more could you ask for a comedy?

Charlie Murray is to be starred in a series of rough-and-tumble features that promise to be just as funny as "Ten Dollars or Ten Days."

Mother, Why Don't You Take Nuxated Iron

And Be Strong and Well and Have Nice Rosy Cheeks Instead of Being Nervous and Irritable All The Time and Looking So Haggard and Old?—The Doctor Gave Some To Susie Smith's Mother and She Was Worse Off Than You Are and Now She Looks Just Fine.

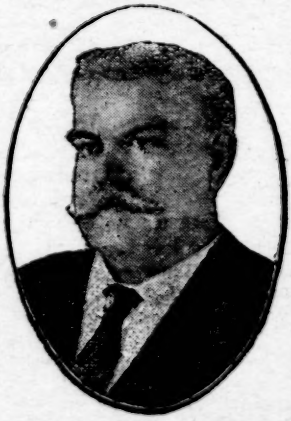
Nuxated Iron Will Increase The Strength and Endurance of Weak, Nervous, Careworn, Haggard Looking Women in Two Weeks' Time in Many Instances.

"There can be no healthy, beautiful, rosy-cheeked women without iron," says Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author. "I have strongly emphasized the fact that doctors should prescribe more organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for their nervous, run-down, weak, haggard looking women patients. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated cornmeal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, you should supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt.

"I have used Nuxated Iron widely in my own practice in most severe aggravated conditions with unfailing results."



Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author, says that physicians should prescribe more organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for their patients—Anaemia—iron deficiency is the greatest curse to the health, strength, vitality and beauty of the modern American woman.—Sounds warning against use of metallic iron which may injure the teeth, corrode the stomach and in many cases do more harm than good; advises use of only Nuxated Iron.

It is surprising how many people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron.

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. Numbers of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while have most astonishingly increased their strength and endurance simply by taking iron in the proper form, and this, after they had in some cases been going on for months without getting benefit from anything.

But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children, is alas, not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Manufacturers' Note: Nuxated Iron which is recommended by physicians is not a secret remedy but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all other druggists.

$5,000.00
IN CASH PRIZES
for Original Short Stories of Present-Day Life for Publication in
The Black Cat

The Prizes Are:

1st Prize	- - - - - - -	$2,000
2nd "	- - - - - - -	1,200
3rd "	- - - - - - -	700
4th "	- - - - - - -	500
5th "	- - - - - - -	300
6th "	- - - - - - -	200
7th "	- - - - - - -	100

THE prize winning stories will be stories of plot, of action, of interesting complication —stories that are meaty and fast-moving, yet both real and reasonable. Spend the sweat of your brow on deeds, not on acute character analysis; on big situations, on suspense and appeal, not on tedious description and fine writing.

The check pulling stories will be the stories of BIG IDEAS, LOGICALLY and POWERFULLY developed.

Write about present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic. No dialect stories will be considered.

Conditions

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full; also the number of words in the story, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000. Do not exceed the latter number.

2. Each manuscript must be typewritten on standard size paper (8½ x 11 inches); must be sent flat or folded, but ***not rolled,*** postage or express charges fully prepaid, and accompanied by stamped addressed envelope for return. Letters concerning stories submitted must be enclosed with manuscripts—not sent under separate cover. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at the writer's risk.

3. Every manuscript will be judged purely on story-value, on its interest in plot and action;

and the name or reputation of a writer will carry no weight whatsoever.

4. All envelopes containing manuscripts should be plainly marked "Prize Contest" and addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th St., New York, N. Y." Their receipt will be acknowledged. Any competitor may send as many stories as he pleases, but in each case he must comply with all the above conditions.

5. Failure of any manuscript to fulfill all the above requirements will automatically eliminate it.

6. The competition will close June 30, 1920, and within sixty days of that date the awards will be announced in THE BLACK CAT and paid in cash. All stories submitted in the competition that are found to be acceptable for publication in THE BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and all stories thus accepted will be published with the statement "Entered in THE BLACK CAT Prize Story Con-